

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT OF WOMEN
ON THE RISE OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY
IN TWENTIETH CENTURY TEXAS

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During the early twentieth century, the Democratic party dominated the conservative political landscape of Texas. Through the 1920s, members of the Republican party focused on patronage and seemed content to maintain the position of minority party. A growing dissatisfaction with the liberal policies of the New Deal during the 1930s created opportunities for state Republicans to woo dissenting Democrats to their side. With a change of leadership within the state GOP after 1950, the Republicans waged serious campaigns for offices for the first time. Republican men exercised their political yearnings through leadership positions. Women, on the other hand, were shut out of the leadership ranks, and, as a consequence, they chose a traditional female strategy. They organized clubs in order to support the new leadership and rising candidates. Against formidable odds, Republican women acted as foot soldiers and worked diligently to attain their objectives.

As early as 1920, Texas Republican women began to organize. In 1938 they joined the newly chartered National Federation of Republican Women. In 1955 Texas women organized the Texas Federation of Republican Women (TFRW). Working through the TFRW, the women became the catalysts that broke the Republican party from its state of inertia, and they significantly contributed to the breakdown of the one-party system in Texas. Willing to do the “shoe leather

politicking” necessary for victory, women became invaluable to GOP candidates, who began their campaigns in the clubhouses of Republican women.

In 1978, with the election of the first Republican governor in a century, Republicans finally brought competitive politics to Texas. By the 1990s, the GOP became the majority party in the state. Republican women were not only important to the growth of the party, they were the driving force that broke the state from the shackles of one-party rule by winning elections through grassroots efforts. This study fully recognizes the rich contribution women made to Texas politics throughout the twentieth century.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In October 1955, Republican women from across Texas gathered in San Antonio and listened to a prophetic message. They heard that their efforts would be the “most effective sparkplug Texas had ever had to bring about a two-party system.” Katherine Brown, regional director of the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW), made this prediction before the Texas Conference of Republican Women. For many years conservative women across the state met locally in attempts to learn more about the Republican party, but they never had a state organization that could pull together all their efforts. Finally, in the fall of 1955, seventeen years after the formation of the NFRW, the Texas women met and organized their own coalition. In creating the newly formed Texas Federation of Republican Women (TFRW), conservative females made Texas the forty-first state to unite its clubs into a state federation. Through their cumulative efforts, the women became the catalysts that broke the Republican party from its state of inertia, and they significantly contributed to the breakdown of the one-party system in Texas.¹

For more than half of the twentieth century, Texas had only one party and one political philosophy. Whether members of the majority party, the Democrats, or of the minority party, the Republicans, Texans were conservative. Most favored a very limited governmental role in the personal and professional lives of individuals. Texas

¹“Texans Urged to Join Ike’s Crusade,” San Antonio Express, October 21, 1955.

conservatives traditionally followed the principles of “rugged individualism.” In an adherence to the strong belief of self-reliance, they were hostile toward labor legislation and labor unions, against the rise of the welfare system, and opposed to increased social services. Furthermore, they resented paying for governmental programs through increased taxation. Also, they did not see the necessity of catering to minorities through civil rights legislation. Overall, they believed that each individual was responsible for paying his or her way. Nationally, there was a growing contingent of Democratic liberals whose beliefs were diametrically opposed to the Texas conservatives, both Republicans and Democrats alike.

Thus, political distinctions in the state were typically based on patronage. When a Republican president was in power, more Republicans frequented precinct, county, and state conventions, as well as the polling booths. Although the GOP was well established on the national level, the party in the Lone Star State did not conduct its first primary until 1956. There was, however, a long history of conservatism in the state, and the modern Republican party in Texas grew from this tradition, a tradition Republican women accepted. The conservative social and political climate in Texas, as well as throughout the South, was not, however, very accommodating to women. First, men did not think that women needed to venture into any other circles that might threaten the balance of power at home; and second, the “fairer sex” was not welcomed into most political arenas, which were controlled by the “sterner sex.”²

²For an overview of conservative and Republican politics in Texas, see Paul Casdorph, A History of the Republican Party in Texas 1865-1965 (Austin: The

The Texas GOP capitalized on splits in the state Democratic party in an effort to further its advances. Both disenchantment with controversial Texas Democratic Governors James and Miriam Ferguson in the 1910s and 1920s, and a growing dissatisfaction with the liberal policies advanced through the New Deal during the 1930s, created opportunities for state Republicans to woo dissenting Democrats over to their side. With a change of direction and leadership within the state party organization after 1950, the Republicans waged serious campaigns for elected offices for the first time. Republican men were able to exercise their political yearnings through positions of leadership. Women, on the other hand, were shut out of the leadership ranks, and, as a consequence, they chose a traditional female strategy. They organized clubs in order to support the new leadership and rising candidates. Against formidable odds, Republican women were willing to act as foot soldiers and work very hard to attain their objectives. There were only a few areas in the state where the men made real progress, but where the men led, Republican women followed.

Although the obstacles facing them appeared quite daunting, Republican women were able to look at club movements of the past and gain the confidence they needed to work toward their goals and ideals. As early as the mid-1800s, women came together to discuss various issues and topics ranging from equal suffrage, temperance, and abolition to an appreciation of literature and the arts. These women stepped out against societal norms, and in most cases the men viewed their gatherings with suspicion. Thus, from the

Pemberton Press, 1965), and Roger M. Olien, From Token to Triumph: The Texas Republicans Since 1920 (Dallas: SMU Press, 1982).

very beginning women had to determine how they could meet and share ideas while at the same time pose no threat to the established, male-dominated society.

For more than a decade before organizing formally as a statewide federation, women in Texas worked together to build the party from the grassroots level. The cities of Dallas, Fort Worth, Tyler, Houston, and San Antonio were the most active areas for the Republican women and GOP candidates. As some Texans grew uneasy with what they viewed as increasing liberal tendencies throughout the Democratic party, the Texas Republican party and Republican women's clubs both experienced steady growth during the 1930s and 1940s. There were very few women who waged campaigns during this building period. The majority of women were committed to working behind the scenes. Generally, they organized around political campaigns. In the early 1950s, several important races, specifically Dwight D. Eisenhower's 1952 presidential run and Bruce Alger's 1954 congressional contest, demonstrated the potential future impact of their involvement. The women were invaluable to these races. They showed their ability to do the "shoe leather politicking" that was necessary for victory. They also built such a strong coalition between these two election years and in 1955 obtained the numbers needed to form the TFRW.

Events in the 1960s offered these women new opportunities, but provided challenges as well. After women united through the TFRW, GOP candidates relied heavily on this volunteer corps. As a result, women campaigned more actively than ever before. In his bid for a U. S. Senate seat in 1961, John Tower implemented the "Womenpower for Tower" strategy, an idea that Representative Alger had used

successfully five years prior. From that time forward, when candidates decided to run for office in Texas, they began their campaigns in the clubhouses of the GOP women.

Also during the 1960s the Republican women faced other issues. The women who had pushed so tirelessly for equity in political circles now faced equality issues within their own gender. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 posed a challenge for these women because it legally eliminated discrimination against all African Americans. Since the mid-1800s, most women's clubs across the nation were racially segregated, a model that was followed by Republican women. While they did not want to be identified as the party of the blacks, they still desired to advance the ideals of an egalitarian state. By the 1960s, most blacks had abandoned their support of the Republican party in favor of Franklin D. Roosevelt's and Harry S Truman's Democratic party. In addition, Republican women had to face new challenges arising from the feminist movement and the formation of the National Organization of Women. They had to learn to balance their limited definition of "women's rights" with the new, liberal thoughts of full equality.

The Texas Republican party also suffered a negative onslaught following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas. The Texas GOP had a strong following in Dallas at that time, but its reputation suffered badly when the city was nicknamed "The City of Hate." How did women handle these challenges? How were they able to overcome the continual ups and downs of the party they so dearly loved? The 1960s proved to be a great training ground for these women in their grassroots movement.

The tumultuous 1970s tested the staying power of the TFRW. The decade began on a positive note for the GOP women. Richard Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign drafted the women forces in Texas, who were led by Senator Tower. Realizing that the women were essential to his victory, he set forth the "Womenpower for Nixon" campaign in Texas, which turned into another success for the Republican women. At a time when the future appeared bright, they faced their ultimate challenges. First, they had to form opinions and take a public policy stance concerning the *Roe v. Wade* (1973) decision. This proved to be very difficult for many of the women and at times created a wedge in their ranks. Many believed that a woman had the right to make decisions involving her own body; however, others believed that regardless of the issue, a dedicated party member would always uphold the party line – and the party stood firmly against abortion. This unresolved issue served as a point of contention well into the 1990s.

The second major challenge of the decade was the Watergate scandal and the resulting resignation of Richard Nixon in disgrace. This was a very difficult time for all Republicans because they had to defend their president while at the same time distancing themselves from him. Following Nixon's resignation, the TFRW tried to focus on upcoming elections and campaigns. They stood behind their elected officials and attempted once again to build up trust and confidence in the Texas GOP. They worked on many local, state, and national campaigns, realizing all the while that their party had suffered a severe blow. For several years, they rested on the premise that the next election would bring relief. In 1978 the Republicans were exonerated when William P. ("Bill") Clements won the governor's office following a campaign that concentrated

heavily on rural areas of the state and on a massive telephone campaign conducted by the women. After a century of Democratic party control, competitive politics had arrived in Texas.

In the 1980 presidential election, Ronald Reagan ushered in a new decade of Republican revival and revolution, and the GOP in Texas flourished. The state conservatives embraced Reagan and his new administration. The Republican women had never perceived the scandals abounding in the Nixon years as politics or business as usual; rather, they had taken it personally. They felt that all of their efforts had gone to waste. With Reagan's election as president, they felt vindicated, and they believed that the GOP had finally received a reprieve after years of paying for the malfeasance of Nixon's administration. With this new emotional charge, the women were determined to surpass all earlier volunteer efforts in order to place more Republicans in office throughout the state. Also, by 1980 the TFRW had the momentum of more than twenty-five years, with many women rising through the ranks and stepping into the political ring themselves.

By 1990, Texas had evolved into a highly competitive two-party state. The TFRW was instrumental in mustering up support for GOP candidates through countless volunteer hours. For seventy years Republican women were determined to push the GOP from the position of minority party to majority party. They worked within the established system and eventually enacted change. In his book From Token to Triumph: The Texas Republicans Since 1920, historian Roger Olien called the women of the Republican party

the “arms, legs, and often the brains of the GOP in Texas.” By 1990 they were also the backbone of the Republican party in Texas.³

The Republican women in Texas were not only important to the growth of the party; they were the driving force that broke the state from the shackles of one-party rule by winning elections through grassroots efforts. Without their energy, the party would not have been able to vie with the Democrats as the majority party. This study will focus on the significance and impact of women on the rise of the Republican party in the state of Texas. It will trace both the developments that led to the formation of the TFRW, as well as the lasting impression the group left on the Texas GOP. In order to understand the significance and impact of women on the Republican party, several questions must be addressed. How were women able to gain such prominence in the Republican Party in such a relatively short period of time? How did they use the methods and strategies perfected in the club women phenomenon decades earlier? Why did candidates decide to tap into this endless resource that had been ignored by party leadership for so long? Was the volunteer corps essential to securing victory? How did women carry the party through the challenges of the 1960s and 1970s? When women began to make the transition from working within the clubs to running for political office, how did the general voting public accept them? The Texas Republican women were definitely the “sparkplug” the GOP needed to push the state into two party politics. Their history is rich, and this study will fully recognize the contribution women made to the Texas political scene throughout the twentieth century.

³Olien, Token to Triumph, ix.

CHAPTER 2

“ORGANIZED WOMANHOOD”:

A MODEL FOR THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF REPUBLICAN WOMEN

The formation of the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW) must be viewed within the context of the development of women’s clubs in general. When the NFRW created a new organization in 1938, it implemented an organizational model that women’s study clubs had successfully developed throughout the nineteenth century as the role of the dutiful wife and mother evolved into that of a political and reform activist. Regardless of the changes in women’s roles, their concerns and goals centered on the community, the family, and, more specifically, the lives of their children. The greatest barrier confronting these women was gender discrimination. By their participation in charitable associations and the abolitionist, temperance, suffrage, and study club movements, women created a legacy of organizational skills and political savvy that opened many doors to the public sphere, including politics, for the Republican women during the twentieth century.¹

¹For an overview of women’s participation in benevolent societies, the Civil War, the reform movements, and the development of study clubs during the nineteenth century, see Glenna Matthews, The Rise of Public Woman: Woman’s Power and Woman’s Place in the United States, 1630-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 93-171; Sheila M. Rothman, Woman’s Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978), 13-96; and, Anne Scott Firor, Natural Allies: Women’s Associations in American History (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 7-78. For a survey of the role of women during the early twentieth

Through incremental stages, women separated themselves from the confinement of their households and gradually became involved in community service. To gain access to the public realm, women first had to break free from the “Cult of True Womanhood.” Historian Barbara Welter stated that prior to 1860 a woman had a “proper sphere,” and if she was not doing family or church work, then she was “out of place.” According to Welter, who studied all the established women’s magazines published from 1820 to 1860, authors of the mid-nineteenth century used the term “True Womanhood” when referring to women as often as “writers on religion mentioned God.” She avowed that if “anyone, male or female, dared to tamper with the complex virtues which make up True Womanhood, he was damned immediately as an enemy of God, of civilization and of the Republic.”²

The majority of American citizens believed that women had a proper place and role in society. The public strictly judged females on their domesticity, their pure and religious nature, and, most importantly, their submissiveness. Men were the breadwinners; women were the homemakers. In the well-established social order of nineteenth-century America, women understood their positions as the “the passive, submissive responders.” Moreover, they were legally and emotionally dependent on the

century, consult Karen J. Blair, The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914 (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980); William H. Chafe, Women and Equality: Changing Patterns in American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 13-42; and, Dorothy Schneider and Carl J. Schneider, American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920 (New York: Facts on File, 1993).

²Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” American Quarterly 18 (Summer 1966): 151-2.

man, regardless of whether it was the father or husband. Women occupied themselves with taking care of the children and household duties and offered an opinion or advice on civic matters only if asked. In the accepted gender assignments of breadwinner-homemaker, society criticized women who ventured from their prescribed role, claiming that they “undermined civilization.” Welter concluded “a stable order of society depended upon [a woman] maintaining her traditional place in it.”³

By the mid-nineteenth century, American society experienced major changes. Industrialism, westward expansion, social reform, and sectional conflict swept the nation. Women grew dissatisfied with the confinement of domestic life and wished to become more active in community affairs. The pervasive ideals of society and woman’s “proper place,” however, made it difficult for those women who sought to widen or increase their sphere of influence. Men were not ready for this change. As a result, some women accused them of discrimination and began to engage in a power struggle for equality. Most women, however, realized that because patterns and traditions were so fully entrenched, they could only achieve change conservatively and incrementally. Each step they took was crucial to redefining women’s gender roles.⁴

³Ibid., 152-3, 155, 158-9, 161, 172-4.

⁴In this chapter, the terms conservative, moderate, and radical are used in a social, rather than political, context. The term “conservative” is used to identify a woman who accepted a limited role in society outside of the home, church, and family-oriented settings. These women did not find it appropriate to challenge the traditional breadwinner-homemaker roles prevalent in American society. Radical, or liberal, women favored a substantially increased role of women in society. Often they sought legislation designed to grant them equal rights with men in all areas of life. They pushed for change and challenged the traditional gender roles in American society. At times they were vocal in their demands and demonstrated against the status quo or the government. The

In their first step, women gathered in benevolent societies and churches to administer charity to the less fortunate. Recognizing their proper place, members of benevolent societies limited themselves to the ideals espoused in the Cult of True Womanhood. The church was the one area of society where women ventured without receiving much criticism from society. The public gave very little sympathy to women who belonged to groups without a religious affiliation. If benevolence was not the purpose, then society considered a woman's activity "unworthy attention," and "injurious doubts were thrown upon its motives."⁵ Their experiences were limited to working with individuals of reduced circumstances through missionary societies, mutual aid associations, sewing groups, or any other organization based on charity.⁶ Although many women viewed the church podium as a safe haven and relatively free from criticism or rebuttal, the male-dominated public often reminded them that it still was not proper for

term "moderate" refers to women who believed that, although females did not have equal status to men, demonstrating and demanding changes were not appropriate responses. Typically, more moderate women did not challenge traditional gender roles, but they did desire to use their leisure time contributing to the community, expanding their minds, and enjoying the company of other women who lived similar lives. Participation in study clubs gave them the opportunity to work within the community and enact changes through community services or charitable organizations. In this chapter, the terms are not used as designations of political leanings, although their social views regarding the role of women eventually did lead to a bias in their political stance. During the period discussed in this chapter, most Texas women were conservative to moderate in nature, regardless of whether they were Republican or Democrat.

⁵Quoted in Jennie June Croley, The History of the Women's Club Movement in America (New York: Henry G. Allen & Co., 1898), 9.

⁶ Scott, Natural Allies, 11, 13.

women to conduct meetings, address groups, or lead others in prayer.⁷ Society expected women to exhibit the traits of "meekness, gentleness and love,"⁸ and considered them out of line if they acted any differently. A woman's destiny was to enjoy the rewards of being a housewife and possess only the desire to please her family. "Her life is a constant giving up of rights and privileges for the happiness of others," claimed a Boston minister in 1869. He repeated the ideas of others when he argued that a woman's work should be within the doors of the home rather than without.⁹

While women in the benevolent societies found ways to work within acceptable limitations, other women challenged the traditional system. Both women and men viewed participants of the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, who demanded suffrage and equal rights, as "revolutionaries, wild enthusiasts, and visionaries."¹⁰ Women who joined together to fight against slavery, however, appeared a bit more palatable because they based their arguments on religious principles, and they did not seek equal leadership positions with men. As a consequence, they gained a small amount of acceptance for women in a new arena. But, of course, women only realized this gain in the northern section of the country.¹¹

⁷Blair, Clubwoman as Feminist, 8; Emma Jackson, "Petticoat Politics: Political Activism Among Texas Women in the 1920s" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, Austin, 1980), 32.

⁸Reverend J.D. Fulton, Woman As God Made Her (Boston: Lee and Shephard, 1869), 178.

⁹Ibid., 192.

¹⁰William H. Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 4.

¹¹Blair, Clubwoman as Feminist, 8-9.

Some members of northern society, however, still scorned women who participated in abolitionist societies. Although the members claimed to have a noble purpose, some citizens regarded anti-slavery organizations as "mad." But during the "electric atmosphere of the antebellum years," a large number of women joined in with the reform spirit, despite periodic ridicule.¹² Vigorous in their fight against slavery, women passed out fliers, circulated petitions, and even spoke before crowds.¹³ As women assumed a more public role, however, even some of the male abolitionists criticized their participation. As a result, women learned to work effectively and efficiently with one another, and, therefore, they stopped soliciting men's assistance in their reform efforts.¹⁴

During the ante-bellum period, there were contingencies of women interested in topics other than abolition who also tested the boundaries of True Womanhood. Under great scrutiny, women began to meet in temperance societies and reading circles during the mid-1800s. Although they abandoned these groups during the Civil War, the experience women gained in a short period of time in new voluntary associations helped them develop the organizational and cooperative skills that were necessary when women were called to assist in the war effort.

Never before in American history had the woman's mettle been tested as it was during the war years.¹⁵ From the onset, women used all of the organizational and

¹²Ibid., 37.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., 3.

¹⁵For further reading on women's participation in the Civil War, see Mary Elizabeth Massey, Women in the Civil War (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1994); Richard Hall, Patriots in Disguise: Women Warriors of the Civil War (New York:

cooperative skills that they possessed. In both the North and the South, women responded within three weeks to the urgent demands of battle.¹⁶ They sewed clothes, preserved food, cooked meals, prepared medical kits and comfort bags, stocked military hospitals with bandages and medicinal supplies, sewed tents, and eventually searched for scarce goods and resources.¹⁷ In the North, women immediately clamored for a constitutional amendment abolishing slavery.¹⁸ They also created the United States Sanitary Commission. Through this organization they raised millions of dollars for food, uniforms, and military supplies.¹⁹ On both sides of the battle lines, women cared for the wounded and assisted them in their transition back to civilian life. In an effort to increase efficiency, they created aid societies. At the close of the first year of the war, approximately 20,000 aid societies existed in the Union and Confederacy combined, most administered by women.²⁰

Women found that their life experiences in the home equipped them for duty during wartime. By caring for sick family members and coordinating a household, they

Paragon House, 1993); Elizabeth D. Leonard, All the Daring of the Soldiers: Women of the Civil War Armies (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999); or, Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

¹⁶Scott, Natural Allies, 59, 68.

¹⁷Ibid., 58; Glenda Riley, Inventing the American Woman: A Perspective On Women's History, 1607-1877 (Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1986), 121.

¹⁸Scott, Natural Allies, 59.

¹⁹Theodora Penny Martin, The Sound of Our Own Voices: Women's Study Clubs, 1860-1910 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 16.

²⁰Riley, Inventing the American Woman, 121.

had learned the skills vital to the war effort.²¹ Furthermore, their wartime participation inspired them to new action after the war as they used their knowledge gained in military hospitals and transferred it to municipal hospitals and clinics. New charitable organizations modeled themselves after the Union's Sanitary Commission.²² Clara Barton saw the tragedies of war and began a crusade for the establishment of a national disaster and crisis relief organization for American citizens. She realized her efforts in the 1870s with the founding of the Red Cross.²³ Some women were content with the compliments they received and the knowledge that they had performed their job well. Others, however, enjoyed their wartime work and subsequently welcomed new opportunities to work with groups outside of the confines of their home and family. Women's historian Glenda Riley asserted that "the Civil War and its aftermath not only shook American society and government to its foundations, but it had a marked influence on the lives and roles of American women."²⁴

Women laid aside their concerns about temperance and suffrage during the war, but these issues reemerged with renewed energy following the conflict. American life changed forever after the Civil War because women found new enjoyment in camaraderie. Capitalizing on cooperative experiences, women's associations surged during the postwar years. The most persistent reformers joined temperance and suffrage groups. Most women, however, were more moderate in nature and unwilling to

²¹Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, 70.

²²Ibid.

²³Riley, Inventing the American Woman, 123.

²⁴Ibid., 121.

challenge the government over laws regarding alcohol consumption or voting rights. These women were active participants in what was later labeled the "club movement." All these women's organizations sought betterment for the community, and their reform spirit proved invaluable at the turn of the century.

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, founded in 1874, revived the antebellum temperance societies. Although the initial interest for temperance receded during the war, the push strongly reemerged in the formation of the official organization.²⁵ The first president of the WCTU, Annie Turner Wittenmeyer, claimed that this crusade was the "fulfillment of women's moral role in the salvation of humankind."²⁶ Leaders implemented religious ideals to train their followers, claiming that whatever worked for Christianity also worked for temperance.²⁷ Members adamantly believed that the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages were a danger to both women and family life and had to be fought with an organized and determined effort.²⁸ They also associated alcohol consumption with the problems of prostitution, infidelity, sexually transmitted diseases, political corruption, and drunkenness.²⁹ Women believed that society entrusted them with the "guardianship of all conscience and

²⁵Scott, Natural Allies, 45.

²⁶Quoted in Riley, Inventing American Woman, 136.

²⁷Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, 67.

²⁸Sarah Slavin, ed., U.S. Interest Groups: Institutional Profiles, "Woman's Christian Temperance Union" (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995), 513-4.

²⁹Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, 67.

morality"; therefore, they viewed their efforts to rid America of alcohol as a part of their civic duty.³⁰

Temperance crusaders employed cooperative efforts in closing down saloons and eradicating evils caused by alcohol in American society. The motto of the WCTU was "Women will bless and brighten every place she enters, and will enter every place." Their purpose involved reforming every husband, father, and son in America. They sought to go about their "job" in a peaceful manner, but when challenged, they became an "army drilled and disciplined," according to popular WCTU president Frances Willard. She also claimed that these women were "an army composed of beloved homemakers and housekeepers who give us scraps and fragments of their time."³¹

This well-organized grassroots organization worked diligently until the WCTU became a powerful influence.³² As the largest women's organization of the nineteenth century, the WCTU became the first women's voluntary association to gain recognition and acceptance from society as a whole. Ultimately, its activism resulted in a constitutional amendment. Reacting as mothers, rather than wives, the women of the WCTU fought to save their neighborhoods and nation in order to secure a better future for America's children. The accomplishments that "organized motherhood" achieved with only "scraps of time" inspired women across the country.³³

³⁰ Schneider and Schneider, American Women in the Progressive Era, 93.

³¹ Quoted in Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, 67.

³² Glenna Matthews, Just A Housewife: The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 156.

³³ Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, 68.

Women suffragists organized the most revolutionary movement of the nineteenth century. Some women who clamored for the vote were reluctant to suspend their crusade during the Civil War; however, they eventually went on a hiatus because they knew that no one would listen to their arguments.³⁴ There were women who worked diligently for the country during the war years and sincerely believed that they would be rewarded with the vote once the war ended. Once they realized that the postwar years were the "Negro's hour," however, suffragists banded together and created grassroots campaigns in an effort to prove that they, too, were worthy of the ballot box.³⁵

By 1869, suffragists organized in two coalitions: the National Woman's Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the American Women's Suffrage Association (AWSA), the latter being more conservative. The NWSA, led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, sought the vote through a constitutional amendment in an organization consisting only of women, but they were often criticized for their radical views and behaviors. The AWSA differed because founders Lucy Stone and her husband, Henry Blackwell, believed change should occur at the local levels. It also had an equal number of women and men in decision-making positions. Although initially employing different tactics, they possessed one similar goal--to win the vote.³⁶ To women interested in social issues, the vote seemed to be a means to acquire enhanced social and child welfare legislation. Politically minded women saw the ballot as a way to influence decision-

³⁴Riley, Inventing the American Woman, 125.

³⁵Matthews, Just A Housewife, 155.

³⁶Chafe, American Woman, 12; Riley, Inventing the American Woman, 126; Scott, Natural Allies 135-6.

making men with the "sensibilities of a woman." The more radical seized upon the chance to redefine their "proper place" and break through discriminatory barriers.³⁷ In 1890, in the name of efficiency, the two factions of the suffrage movement merged and formed the National American Women's Suffrage Association.³⁸ A few women's associations, most notably the WCTU, eventually joined the suffragists, but their radicalism alienated the majority of organized American women for many years. Ultimately, women succeeded in obtaining the right to vote, but their efforts failed to bring about the political influence envisioned by many of these women.³⁹

The WCTU and the NAWSA were remarkably successful in bringing women into the public sphere, but too often members focused on a single issue and became so confrontational and dogmatic that they drove a large number of females away. These reformers, however, did not lead the club movement that swept through American society; rather, more moderate to conservative women, whose original aim was self-improvement instead of social reform, initiated it. New club members believed that if they improved themselves individually, they would in turn be better wives and mothers. They saw their actions as "stretching" the ideals of homemaking and mothering and made it clear that they never intended to compete against their husbands, fathers, or sons. The women at the center of the club movement purposely set themselves apart from their more radical contemporaries by organizing associations that were both palatable and non-

³⁷ Chafe, Women and Equality, 29.

³⁸ Chafe, American Woman, 12.

³⁹ Chafe, Women and Equality, 29.

threatening to most men. Women's club activist Jennie Croley stated that as the clubs grew, women were determined to avoid all religious and political differences that could potentially antagonize men.⁴⁰

Club members did not seek to gain power by breaking free from their prescribed roles, but rather they built on the ideals of True Womanhood. Initially women joined study clubs. During their meetings they typically discussed topics and presented essays members prepared dealing with history, art, or literature. Originally, they did not discuss or study social problems. As time passed, however, they periodically widened their scope and volunteered their time for a community-based project of common interest to all members. As their focus on self-improvement grew to seeking improvements for the community at large, women club members gradually helped bring about major changes on the local, state, and federal levels, while never challenging socially acceptable limitations. Maintaining a focus that centered on the family, club members instituted kindergartens, playgrounds, day nurseries, libraries, city parks, settlement houses, and community clean-up campaigns. Eventually, they expanded their work to include jail reform, legislation concerning child labor, sanitation, and juvenile delinquency. Although club members adhered to their primary purpose of “studying,” every women’s club, no matter how small, eventually set goals for civic improvement.⁴¹

Not all citizens accepted the club concept, however. Both men and women leveled indictments against club members for challenging tradition and belittling the

⁴⁰Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, 64.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 70.

established role of the American women. Southern women embraced the club movement slowly. They did not have the foundation established in the abolition societies like the northerners did. Also, southern societies, in general, were more accustomed to bonding through the ties of kinship, not of gender. Furthermore, southerners more readily rejected the changing or reordering of society due to their conservative nature. Despite their unpopularity with some citizens, however, the club movement had become a part of American life for a large number of women.⁴²

Women's voluntary associations became so commonplace that by 1900 it was rare for an American woman not to have access to a club. The purpose and origin of clubs may have varied greatly, but all women learned common practices, including how to conduct business, carry on a meeting, draft official documents, follow parliamentary procedure, raise funds, and manage money. Although club membership included both the educated and uneducated, black and caucasian, rich and poor, young and old, liberal and conservative, or the married and single, they all had one thing in common--they helped shatter the old image that women must stay at home to properly care for the family.⁴³

The cornerstone of the club movement was the study club. The original goal was to provide an educational forum for women of all classes and experience. Often referred to as the "school for middle aged women" or the "university extension of the home," study clubs offered an intellectual atmosphere most women did not find at home or in the

⁴²Martin, Sound of Our Own Voices, 119.

⁴³Scott, Natural Allies, 2.

church.⁴⁴ Although critics scoffed at them and questioned the value of their “learning,” club women took their discussions and the essays they prepared very seriously.⁴⁵

The majority of members of the early study clubs were a part of the emerging leisure class. Following the Civil War, the wives and daughters of prosperous professionals, white-collar workers, and farmers found themselves with extra time during the day. A new supply of factory-made goods, coupled with an affordable household staff (comprised of ex-slaves), provided them with free time. Women did not want to become unproductive during their leisure time, so they flocked to literary circles.⁴⁶ Most husbands supported their wife’s newly found outlet, provided that she joined only one club.⁴⁷ Club members did not want to alter their prescribed roles in society and remained determined to assure men that all gender lines were still intact, and that the time they spent with their discussion groups was simply a learning experience, not a “monster” ready to consume the world.⁴⁸

In reality women did not meet together strictly for educational purposes. Women attending sessions felt invigorated, and they established new friendships, socialized, and at times they simply had fun.⁴⁹ Women were careful, however, not to offend anyone with their activities because as the numbers of study clubs grew, so did the criticism. Some

⁴⁴Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, 65.

⁴⁵Martin, Sound of Our Own Voices, 3.

⁴⁶Scott, Natural Allies, 80.

⁴⁷Edward Bok, “My Quarrel With Women's Clubs,” The Ladies' Home Journal 27 (January 1910): 5-6.

⁴⁸Martin, Sound of Our Own Voices, 121.

⁴⁹Rothman, Woman's Proper Place, 66.

preachers still proclaimed from the pulpit that women failed to fulfill their "role" or accomplish their "mission" when they joined clubs and turned "from the joys of the home to the revel of jovial companions."⁵⁰

The study club that provided the structural framework for all subsequent educational associations was Sorosis, which was organized in 1868 in New York. Founded on the idea that all women would be accepted, the members of the club were "hospitable to women of different minds, degrees, and habits of work."⁵¹ Sorosis was the first voluntary club in the nation to limit membership to women.⁵² There were women in other areas of the country joining literary groups at the time Sorosis organized, but men led those organizations. Exclusive study clubs for women quickly began to surface following the formation of this landmark organization.⁵³

Members of Sorosis were careful not to be confrontational in nature. Still, outsiders who did not understand their purpose labeled them as "suspicious." As a stated priority, Sorosis remained true to the ideas of True Womanhood.⁵⁴ In maintaining the appearance that they were not challenging the "system," members planned socials and balls to prove that they were still "ladies" who enjoyed engaging in feminine things such as "culinary and floral delights," music, dancing, and small talk.⁵⁵ According to historian

⁵⁰Quoted in Fulton, Woman As God Made Her, 196-7.

⁵¹Croley, History of the Women's Club, 18.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Rothman, Women's Proper Place, 65.

⁵⁴Quoted in Blair, Clubwoman as Feminist, 7.

⁵⁵Martin, Sound of Our Own Voices, 120-1.

Karen Blair, women were eventually able to integrate into the public sphere using traits nurtured in both their homes and the club.⁵⁶

Often members organized a club with just a few participants. For example, in 1885 in Houston, Texas, nine women, mostly concerned about the need for companionship and greater knowledge, met and formed the Ladies' History Class with education and socializing as their goal. Within two months the membership tripled, and they changed their name to the Ladies' Reading Club, drafted a constitution, and set forth an official plan of study.⁵⁷ Whether in smaller groups like the one in Houston or larger associations like Sorosis, the typical study club never threatened the established social order or ideas embraced in True Womanhood. They came about at a time when women had more free time.⁵⁸ Their mothers and grandmothers had worked in benevolent societies and charitable organizations, and they simply sought a similar outlet for their energy.

All study clubs followed the same basic organizational model. Members carefully attended to every detail. Every club, no matter how small, had a written constitution. This document included: the name of the association; the purpose of the group; the officers and the processes of their nominations and elections; schedule of meetings; and provisions for amendments. All clubs required a president and secretary, and most had

⁵⁶Blair, Clubwomen As Feminist, 7.

⁵⁷Betty T. Chapman, "From the Parlor to the Public: New Roles for Women in Houston, 1885-1918," The Houston Review: History and Culture of the Gulf Coast 15 (1993): 32.

⁵⁸Martin, Sound of Our Own Voices, 118.

vice-presidents and a treasurer. Bylaws for each organization covered rules concerning: methods of admission of new members; duties of officers; provisions for filling vacancies; initiation fees and dues; time and place of meetings; number constituting a quorum; standing committees; provisions for authority; and parliamentary authority. Women always stressed efficiency and effectiveness during the club movement. This organizational framework worked so well for women's club during the late nineteenth century that women throughout the twentieth century adopted the same guidelines.⁵⁹

In 1890, the General Federation of Women's Clubs formed using this same pattern. Due to the proliferation of clubs in the country at that time, a burgeoning need for an umbrella organization that could offer American club women direction arose. Most of the charter clubs that enlisted in the GFWC were study clubs. It was difficult, however, for representatives from every club in the nation to attend conventions, and communication was not always efficient. As a result, local clubs began to unite in state federations that operated under the guidance of the GFWC. Ultimately, all federations combined forming a powerful lobby group.⁶⁰

A group of women met in Waco, Texas, to form the Texas Federation of Women's clubs (TFWC) in 1897. Although the twenty-one charter clubs were originally considered study clubs, the members of TFWC agreed that the time had come for clubs to split their focus between discussing literary and historical topics and working on

⁵⁹Carolyn Underhill, "The Clubwoman's Guide: How to Organize a Club Properly," The Ladies' Home Journal 32 (October 1915): 54.

⁶⁰Schneider and Schneider, American Women in the Progressive Era, 98.

community service projects. They believed that club members should no longer be satisfied unless they were doing something for the community.⁶¹ Leaders of the federation later proclaimed that they were proud of their involvement in helping awaken the “sluggish, civic consciousness of voters” in Texas.⁶² By 1900, much like other females across the nation, Texas women recognized clubs as vehicles for civic improvement.⁶³

Although members cautiously guarded the clubs from criticism, they were never above reproach. Even as the clubs became more socially accepted, indictments still arose from those who claimed that this diversion led to the disintegration of the home.⁶⁴ The essays the women wrote and shared with club members came under great scrutiny as well. Reverend J. D. Fulton proclaimed that “the pen may serve as a feather to adorn her social life, but it looks mean when the use of it causes the neglect of the needle.”⁶⁵ Another critic stated that the “unintelligent manner in which the woman’s club sought to present so-called ‘courses’ in study” probably did “incalculable harm” creating a type of female who possessed what was “jocularly known as ‘women’s club knowledge.’” He added that this “undigested, superficial knowledge” was worse than “no knowledge at all,” and he feared that study club women acquired knowledge that would have to be “unlearned” later in life. He saw no problem with the concept of women’s clubs, but,

⁶¹Stella Christian, ed., The History of the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs (Houston: Dealy-Adey-Elgin Co., 1919), ix, 23,

⁶²Ibid., 4.

⁶³Ibid., 349.

⁶⁴Martin, Sound of Our Own Voices, 118.

⁶⁵Fulton, Woman As God Made Her, 202.

like many others, he believed that members could make better use of their time.⁶⁶ In their defense, club women were not accustomed to speaking up in public and complaining about social ills. For many years their voices and opinions remained quiet and unrecognized. Once they learned that leadership and reforms were not tied to masculinity, however, clubs gradually shifted their focus to better the lives of all members of society.⁶⁷

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, clubs began to move quickly away from self-improvement and toward community service, and eventually they grew to be political activist organizations. As the numbers of strictly study clubs decreased, voluntary associations increased proportionately. In a statement before club women, reformer and club activist Mary Decker said, “Dante is dead. He has been dead for several centuries, and I think it is time we dropped the study of his *Inferno* and turned our attention to our own.”⁶⁸ Once club women decided to focus their attention on the problems facing their communities instead of topics dealing with art, history, and literature, the club movement expanded dramatically. The support system created by activists who were finally questioning the status quo and the decisions being made by their local, state, and federal leaders touched every part of the country. Culture study readily “slipped to the side once they realized that collectively they could have

⁶⁶Bok, “My Quarrel With Women’s Clubs,” 5.

⁶⁷Martin, Sound of Our Own Voices, 131-2.

⁶⁸Quoted in Schneider and Schneider, American Women in the Progressive Era, 99.

considerable impact on any issue they deemed important.”⁶⁹ Reformer Jane Addams stated that “lumbering our minds with literature only served to cloud the really vital situation spread before our eyes.”⁷⁰ Study clubs had finally grown from being totally self-absorbed to displaying an interest in the needs of the community. Their essay topics changed from “Hurry,” “Table Manners,” or “The *Iliad*,” to “The Need for a District Nurse in Cambridge,” “The Tenement House,” or “The Eight-Hour Law.”⁷¹ Significant, major changes took place; however, no one ever denied the fact that the study club was an important and necessary step in the maturation of organized women.

The new clubs thus became a training ground for community workers and social activists.⁷² They learned their own brand of professionalism before they entered into the traditional professions, and they understood the need for cooperation.⁷³ The new types of associations also provided careers for many women, “careers from which the income was psychic rather than material.”⁷⁴ Furthermore, women learned that they could think for themselves, and they realized that it was not just their right, but also their duty, to form opinions. In essence, they learned how to become better community servants.⁷⁵

⁶⁹Blair, Clubwoman as Feminist, 119.

⁷⁰Quoted in Schneider and Schneider, American Women in the Progressive Era, 96.

⁷¹Scott, Natural Allies, 111, 121, 123.

⁷²Rothman, Women’s Proper Place, 66.

⁷³Scott, Natural Allies, 3.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Rothman, Woman’s Proper Place, 66.

Regardless of the size of the group or project, club women continually emphasized that they never forgot or neglected their homes.⁷⁶ They held tightly to the ideals of femininity, and they believed that the shifting focus of club members worked to fulfill their special attributes, rather than challenge them.⁷⁷ Women addressed issues that negatively impacted the family, and they became considerably more vocal on issues such as prison and jail reforms, physical fitness, orphanages, homes for the aged, juvenile courts, police matrons, playgrounds, libraries, kindergartens, improved sanitation, and living conditions in the cities.⁷⁸ The club woman of the 1890s was far more prepared to tackle public problems than her mother and grandmother had been; however, she never forgot to credit her ancestors who laid the groundwork for her.⁷⁹

Although the organizational patterns of clubs were similar, there were several associations that had significantly different priorities. More specifically, African-American women, rural women, and educated women sought different goals than the traditional clubwoman did. The organizations were not extensions of the typical urban, middle-class, white woman's club; rather, they formed independently.⁸⁰ Their perspectives and circumstances separated them from the traditional women's clubs.

⁷⁶Scott, *Natural Allies*, 154.

⁷⁷Rothman, *Woman's Proper Place*, 66.

⁷⁸Ibid., 68; Scott, *Natural Allies*, 178; Martin, *Sound of Our Own Voices*, 4.

⁷⁹Blair, *Clubwoman As Feminist*, 119.

⁸⁰Floris Loretta Barnett Cash, "Womanhood and Protest: The Club Movement Among Black Women, 1892-1922" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1986), 2.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the attitudes of most Americans forced African-American women to organize segregated clubs. In 1896, seventy-three delegates from twenty-five states formed the National Association of Colored Women. These upwardly mobile females desired to “promote the welfare of all women”; however, their main concern was to alleviate the effects of racial oppression and develop services for the black community.⁸¹ From the inception, black club women were concerned with the social problems that engulfed their neighborhoods. According to feminist historian Gerda Lerner, “The immediate stimulus of their formation was political: the defense of the race against lynching.”⁸² Like the white woman’s clubs, they were also interested in issues like day nurseries, orphanages, jail reform, settlement houses, girl’s homes, mother’s clubs, asylums, and hospitals; however, they were also concerned with Jim Crow laws, segregated institutions throughout society, and overall racial oppression and discrimination.⁸³ Black women felt “intricately tied” to every member of their community and extended services to everyone regardless of how “lowly, uneducated, or illiterate”⁸⁴ They were more successful than the white women in bridging the gaps between the social classes in their respective races and caring for the needs of the

⁸¹Quoted in Institutional Profiles, “National Association of Colored Women,” 296; Cash, Women and Protest, 3.

⁸²Gerda Lerner, “Early Community Work of Black Club Women,” Journal of Negro History 59 (April 1974): 160.

⁸³Institutional Profiles, “NACW,” 297; Cash, Women and Protest, 6.

⁸⁴Schneider and Schneider, American Women in the Progressive Era, 100.

impoverished.⁸⁵ According to historian Floris Cash, “The work of black club women contributed to the survival of the Black community.”⁸⁶

Typically, women’s clubs were found in the cities, although a contingent of rural women were also interested in reform movements. Circumstances, however, limited their access. With the formation of the Southern Farmer’s Alliance in 1877, women found a new opportunity. Rural women had worked side-by-side with their husbands and fathers for decades, and as a result they enjoyed greater acceptance within their culture than their urban counterparts because they did not adhere to the traditional breadwinner-homemaker roles. In a study on women and the Populist movement, historian Marion Barthelme stated, “By no way did these women confine themselves to domestic concerns and leave civic problems to the menfolk.” Women were an important part of the farming community; thus, Alliance leaders offered membership to white females over sixteen years of age. The leadership recognized women as “a very powerful element of strength.” Women responded in large numbers and eventually comprised 25 percent of the Southern Alliance.⁸⁷ Some southern states discouraged women from joining, but Texas embraced the idea. The Texan women were some of the most active and influential Alliance participants.⁸⁸

⁸⁵Lerner, “Early Community of Black Club Women,” 167.

⁸⁶Ibid.; Cash, Women and Protest, 6.

⁸⁷Marion K. Barthelme, Women in the Texas Populist Movement: Letters to the Southern Mercury (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 4, 8.

⁸⁸Ibid., 6, 11.

The Alliances did for farm families what the clubs did for city women.⁸⁹ Female farm workers concerned themselves with education, living conditions in the city, studying the arts, and women's colleges. Alliance aims were to "build a better state mentally, morally, socially, and financially," and women were considered crucial in obtaining these goals.⁹⁰ They had equal representation and a recognized voice on all issues dealing with natural resources, farm isolation, and agricultural woes.⁹¹ Interestingly, rural women were so concerned with the horrible conditions of the urban areas that they initiated a program in order to treat city women and children to an old-style, country vacation.⁹²

By the end of the nineteenth century, young American women decided to break tradition and attend colleges and universities. Their mothers, who had learned the value of acquiring knowledge through their clubs, prompted their daughters to make this decision. According to historian William Chafe, "Sending a daughter to college, however, was in many instances like letting the genie out of the bottle." After being treated as an equal and engaging in "intellectual exploration," most of these young women did not look forward to a life limited by the boundaries of the home.⁹³ As they graduated, however, they became frustrated because little room existed for them in the work force.⁹⁴

⁸⁹Schneider and Schneider, American Women in the Progressive Era, 97

⁹⁰Barthelme, 10.

⁹¹Ibid., 8, 47.

⁹²Schneider and Schneider, American Women in the Progressive Era, 97.

⁹³Chafe, Women and Equality, 27.

⁹⁴Ibid., 28.

Women graduates who were able to enter a profession still experienced a great deal of isolation because often they were excluded from the men's organizations. In a quest to seek others who shared their situation, these new professional women found answers in the actions of their mothers and grandmothers years before--they organized. Women instituted professional clubs to protect their members, establish professional standards, and offer camaraderie among the members.

There were several major umbrella associations that proved beneficial to professional women. The American Nurses' Association, founded in 1896, pushed for state registration of nurses and the establishment of the designation registered nurse (RN).⁹⁵ The American Medical Women's Association also formed along traditional lines in 1915. Not only were they concerned with professional standards, but they also sought to enhance the personal lives of its members and to promote better health care standards for all women.⁹⁶ The National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Club of the U.S.A. organized in 1919 in order to protect both professional women and businesswomen. It actively pursued political and economic equality for all women.⁹⁷ All three of these groups used the organizational structures and patterns developed in the women's study clubs throughout the late nineteenth century. The strategies had "staying power" and aptly withstood the reform pressures of the early twentieth century.

⁹⁵Institutional Profiles, "American Nurses' Association," 59-60.

⁹⁶Ibid., "American Medical Women's Association," 57.

⁹⁷Ibid., "National Federation of Business and Professional Women U.S.A.," 374.

The combination of the efforts of the WCTU, NAWSA, study clubs, black women's clubs, Alliance associations, and professional organizations prepared women for the demands of the Progressive movement that began at the turn of the century. This "large reservoir of talent" was ready to be "mobilized for social reform purposes."⁹⁸ After 1900, prohibitionists and suffragists gained strength every day, and the GFWC grew to over two million members by 1910. The women of America "played an important part in creating the atmosphere for reform" during the early twentieth century.⁹⁹

Historian William Chafe claimed that there might have been two Progressive movements: one based on the cultural politics of men and the other based on cultural politics of women. He viewed the Progressive movement as a woman's movement.¹⁰⁰ The issues that some women studied and promoted for years through club work became central to the new reform movement. A plethora of organizations led by men welcomed women as members, but they generally expected the women to "enlist as foot soldiers" and were not "interested in having them join the officer corps."¹⁰¹ Women, however, contentedly continued working through their own associations, because men tended to

⁹⁸Chafe, Women and Equality, 28.

⁹⁹Chafe, The American Woman, 233.

¹⁰⁰William Chafe, Paradox of Change: American Women in the Twentieth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 16.

¹⁰¹Judith McArthur, "Motherhood and Reform in the New South: Texas Woman's Political Culture in the Progressive Era" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, Austin, 1992), 2.

draft and suggest legislation that emphasized the benefits of reform on a scale larger than women were accustomed. As the business and political leaders of the country, men concerned themselves more with issues such as railroad ordinances, trusts, monopolies, banking, and the regulation of industry. Women, on the other hand, looked more at the needs of the citizenry, emphasizing issues ranging from child labor, maximum work hours, minimum wages, factory safety, and day nurseries to building parks, establishing libraries, and regulating sweatshops.¹⁰² All of the goals and objectives women delineated during the Progressive era originated in the voluntary associations of previous decades. Women recognized their responsibility and dedicated themselves to the reform movement.

Eventually, sponsors for Progressive programs sought out the endorsements of the women's clubs, and the simple fact that they were being consulted made them realize a goal set by their mothers and grandmothers decades before.¹⁰³ Voluntary associations took on the task of "municipal housekeeping." They met, discussed the topic of interest, and decided on a position. From that point they either raised the appropriate funds or published their opinion, usually they did both.

In some major cities, the press assisted in giving the women direction. For example, the women's editor for the *Dallas Morning News*, Pauline Periwinkle, was a driving force in bringing about reforms in Texas. She educated readers and worked in cooperation with women's clubs across the state from 1893 to 1916. Periwinkle

¹⁰²Chafe, *Paradox of Change*, 16.

¹⁰³McArthur, "Motherhood and Reform," 243.

prompted women's clubs to move on issues such as a new public library, free kindergarten, juvenile courts, playgrounds, police matrons, public parks, pure food laws, and eventually, suffrage. All these crusades produced satisfactory results. At times she employed creative fund raising activities. Determined to establish a play park for children in Dallas, she called for a "tag day" on the last day of February in 1909. Women flocked to the downtown area and sold "tags," or badges, that denoted the wearer's support of a public play area. They combined their funds with city funds and dedicated a park on Thanksgiving Day in the same year. Additionally, women's clubs paid the first two years salary for a supervisor in order to prove the need for one. They were so successful in this endeavor that they implemented the same tactics to acquire a police matron. The cities of New Orleans, Atlanta, Cleveland, and New York City were among the urban areas where the local newspaper joined with the women's clubs in order to enact civic improvements.¹⁰⁴

Throughout the Progressive Era, women across the country pushed for a wide variety of reforms. Through voluntary associations, members demanded improvements in food sanitation, the water supply, and garbage cleanup; they also pushed to beautify towns and cities by planting thousands of trees and flowers. Women campaigned for

¹⁰⁴Jacquelyn McElhaney, "Pauline Periwinkle: Prodding Dallas into the Progressive Era" in Women and Texas History: Selected Essays edited by Fane Downs and Nancy Baker Jones (Austin, Texas: Texas State Historical Association, 1993), 42, 45, 50, 52-3.

better roads and cleaner waterways.¹⁰⁵ They worked for educational reform, compulsory attendance, and the formation of parent-teacher associations.¹⁰⁶ One of their most avid crusades centered on the building of public libraries. Women donated and repaired books, raised funds for book purchases, created a makeshift library wherever there was a small space, and even started traveling libraries.¹⁰⁷ In a unflattering comment, author Helen M. Winslow said in her 1906 novel that a “picture of [Andrew] Carnegie handing out a library to a starving man on his back door step would have served as a portrait of our club idea.”¹⁰⁸ Regardless of the criticism, women confronted the challenges of the Progressive Era and met their task head on.

By the height of the Progressive Era, career and club women decided that they could exert more influence if they possessed the right to vote.¹⁰⁹ They believed that they could protect the sanctity of the home, or their “proper place,” more effectively if they had the ballot.¹¹⁰ In 1914, the GFWC adopted the suffrage plank, claiming that their “dedication to civic advancement in America” gave them no other option.¹¹¹ Finally, the club members, who had distanced themselves from the suffragists for so long, joined the women’s movement and fought for the right to vote.¹¹² In Texas alone, 386,500 females

¹⁰⁵Edith Rickert, “What Women’s Clubs Have Really Done: A Splendid Record of Practical Work Successfully Carried Out” The Ladies’ Home Journal 29 (October 1912): 12.

¹⁰⁶McArthur, “Motherhood and Reform,” 242.

¹⁰⁷Schneider and Schneider, American Women in the Progressive Era, 97.

¹⁰⁸Quoted in *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁰⁹Chafe, Women and Equality, 29.

¹¹⁰Chafe, American Women, 13.

¹¹¹Rothman, Woman’s Proper Place, 131.

¹¹²Chafe, American Women, 17.

registered to vote in only seventeen days once it appeared as though the vote was to be imminent in 1920.¹¹³ Chafe observed that, suffrage was the most influential element in “eliminating the inconsistency between men’s status and women’s status under the law.”¹¹⁴

By 1920, club members relinquished their political influence.¹¹⁵ Women’s groups had been a part of a broader Progressive alliance, and for various reasons they shifted their focus once the reform spirit waned.¹¹⁶ As the women’s federation expanded in size during the Progressive era, internal problems surfaced. A lack of efficiency developed. Members duplicated work in some areas and ignored important tasks in others. Leaders often mismanaged finances. Although the various clubs worked on many projects, they had few common goals. As a result, a growing split erupted between the GFWC and its state federations. In order to heal this rift, the leaders established a new Bureau of Information to recapture continuity and efficiency. The members began to worry more about the problems within the organization, rather than in the community.¹¹⁷

New women’s groups continued to form, however, despite the decline in reform or political activity. The National League of Women Voters formed in order to educate the new woman voter.¹¹⁸ Study clubs still remained active. In 1926, for example, The

¹¹³Jackson, “Petticoat Politics,” 12.

¹¹⁴Chafe, Women and Equality, 29.

¹¹⁵Matthews, Rise of Public Woman, 178.

¹¹⁶Chafe, American Women, 29.

¹¹⁷Mrs. Percy V. Pennybacker, “The Women’s Club This Autumn: What Makes for Efficiency,” and Mary I. Woods, “The Women’s Club This Autumn: The Bureau of Information,” The Ladies’ Home Journal 32 (October 1915): 27.

¹¹⁸Institutional Profiles, “League of Women Voters,” 250.

History Club of El Paso, Texas, formed when a group of women playing bridge decided they wanted to get together to study history.¹¹⁹ Clubs continued to develop every year in cities across the nation. Although each club focused on a new idea, they all used the organizational model developed by women's groups decades before.

In studying the history of the women's club movement in America, various similarities between the clubs emerged. First, members of successful clubs established non-threatening agendas, which did not alter accepted gender roles. They openly recognized that white men held a position of dominance and unquestioned privilege, and they did not challenge the existing system or seek equal leadership roles in the community. When club members suffered conflicts between home and the club house, they affirmed that improvement of the family was central to their involvement. Another similar characteristic of the early club movement was that generally clubs formed locally, then created a larger state organization, and eventually established a national federation. Over time, local units typically developed a considerable gap between their policies and those of the state and national boards; therefore, most organizations created a "committee on exchange" responsible for sharing ideas and distributing information.¹²⁰ One of the most important common characteristics of club women was that they were dedicated workers. They raised money for community projects through intensive labor efforts. Volunteers worked as foot-soldiers passing out fliers and circulating petitions. Women

¹¹⁹Helen Gillett, "A History of the History Club, El Paso, Texas" Password 33 (Summer 1988): 93.

¹²⁰Scott, Natural Allies, 179, 180.

worked effectively through cooperative efforts and honed the mechanics of running a meeting into an art. Based on a strong foundation, associations involved in the women's club movement provided a good example for other female organizers to emulate.

Twentieth century Republican women demonstrated a personal style consistent with the concepts developed by study clubs.¹²¹ Therefore, the National Federation of Republican Women, as well as the Texas Federation of Republican Women, naturally adopted the model provided by the women's club movement of the nineteenth century. They did not challenge Republican male leadership for power; rather, they worked within socially acceptable limitations. The leaders of Republican women's groups recognized the dangers that easily occurred if they did not establish a clear chain of authority and a method for disseminating information. They recognized that in order for a grassroots effort to succeed, members had to dedicate many hours of their leisure time to hard work. Organizers also realized that women's clubs working effectively through cooperative efforts gradually increased their political influence. Working within traditional, socially acceptable limitations and capitalizing on every small gain, Republican women implemented the club women's model and, as a result, became a driving force in Texas politics by the late twentieth century.

¹²¹During most of the twentieth century, Democrats controlled politics in Texas, and Democratic women who wanted to enact politically-based changes typically sought to do so through the official state party organization.

CHAPTER 3

THE EVOLUTION OF THE TEXAS GOP

1874-1954

Reflecting on Texas politics during the twentieth century, Senator John G. Tower once commented that early on “you practically had to hold a gun on somebody to get him to run as a Republican.”¹ There were those, however, who were willing to risk political suicide, and their persistent efforts eventually paid off in the 1950s when Texas gave the appearance of becoming a two-party state. For the first three decades of the twentieth century, Texas Republicans had focused on patronage power; however, once the Democrats firmly took control of the Executive Office in 1932, the Texas GOP had to become either an active, office-seeking political faction or cease to exist as a viable political party. Following World War II, insurgents finally ousted the well-organized, but passive, leadership of the Republican party in Texas. In the 1950s, the “new Republicans” turned to the well-established and eager women’s Republican clubs and found there the grassroots organizations they needed in order to achieve success in the political arena.²

¹John G. Tower, Consequences: A Personal and Political Memoir (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), 14.

²For a survey of the Republican party in Texas from 1874 to 1954, consult Ron Tyler, et. al., The New Handbook of Texas (6 Vols., Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1996), V, 533-35; Paul Casdorph, A History of the Republican Party in Texas 1865-1965 (Austin: The Pemberton Press, 1965); and, Roger M. Olien, From Token to Triumph: The Texas Republicans Since 1920 (Dallas: SMU Press, 1982).

White, native, conservative Democrats took control of Texas politics in 1874 following the ouster of Governor E. J. Davis's Republican regime. According to historian Randolph B. Campbell, "The majority of Texans found scalawag policies and administration completely unacceptable and rejoiced when conservative Democrats 'redeemed' the state."³ By 1900, however, practically no difference existed in the political philosophy of Democrats and Republicans in a state dominated by conservative thought. Based on traditional Judeo-Christian values, Texas conservatives staunchly supported laissez-faire government. They represented the oil, gas, utility, insurance, and banking industries. Dedicated to low taxes, they sought tax breaks and relaxed regulations on their businesses. Adhering to a states' rights philosophy, they exhibited "an extreme reluctance to expand state services." They opposed legislation that catered to or created reform for the labor interests, and they also strongly supported the "political, social, and economic oppression of black and brown Texans."⁴ All in all, therefore, most white Texans agreed on a conservative agenda for the state.

The most significant question that demanded a definitive answer by conservative Republicans at the turn of the century was: "what to do about the blacks?." The African-American voters historically supported the Republican party in the South. When Democrats systematically barred the Negro from the voting booth, Texas Republicans

³Randolph B. Campbell, "Carpetbagger Rule in Reconstruction Texas: An Enduring Myth," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 97 (April 1994), 587, 594.

⁴George Norris Green, A Liberal View of Texas Politics Since the 1930s (Boston: American Press, 1981), 4.

had to make a decision on the so-called “Negro question,” and by 1920 they publicly took a stand against involvement of blacks in party affairs.⁵

Blacks had been the strength of the southern Republican party since the end of the Civil War. As a matter of fact, the undisputed leader of the party in Texas from 1883 to 1896 was native-born Texan Norris Wright Cuney, an African American. Typically, each state had a “referee” who distributed federal appointments in their respective state. Usually, the President looked to a United States Senator or Congressman to be the referee in each state, but during the years of Republican executive administrations, Texas had no nationally ranked representative. Therefore, as the national committeeman for Texas, Cuney had considerable influence over federal patronage in the state.⁶ While he received strong support from his appointees throughout the state, he also had his critics. A group of southern Republicans called “lily-whites” arrived on the scene in the 1880s and argued that continued association with blacks would hamper the party’s growth. Blacks appealed to northern Republicans for assistance, but all too often the Republican presidential candidates were more eager to secure the support of the vocal minority of the southern whites than to help the blacks. As a result, a favorable atmosphere emerged in which “lily-whiteism” could take hold. Some GOP officials went so far as to schedule meetings in segregated facilities so that they could deny admittance to African

⁵Paul Casdorph, Republicans, Negroes, and Progressives in the South, 1912-1916 (University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1981), vii.

⁶Ibid.; Paul Casdorph, A History of the Republican Party in Texas 1865-1965 (Austin: The Pemberton Press, 1965), 11, 46.

Americans. Although challenged, Cuney was able to maintain control of the Texas party until 1892 when his power came under increased attack.⁷

On April 12, 1892, a group of white Republicans met in an alternate state convention in Dallas because they were unhappy with the results of the official Republican State Convention held a month earlier. Numerous whites had attended the earlier convention, but the black leadership ignored them. Believing that Cuney's supporters "rode rough shod" over them, they met and created a slate of their own delegates to send to the National Republican Convention scheduled for later in the year in Minneapolis, Minnesota. For the first time, Texans held a Republican state convention without a single African American present. Several attendees gave speeches condemning blacks and issued a call for a "whites-only" Republican party. Although Cuney's official Texas delegation soundly defeated the white coalition at the national convention, the lily-whites made inroads and strove to drive a wedge in the party's existing structure in Texas.⁸

The 1896 presidential conventions marked a shift of power in the Republican party in Texas. At the Republican National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, that year, Cuney miscalculated and threw all of his support, and thus his delegation's, to the wrong presidential candidate. He supported an old personal friend, William B. Allison of Iowa. As usual, there had been several "alternate" conventions held in Texas, and surprisingly a rival delegation supported by neither Cuney nor the lily-whites was seated. Fortunately

⁷Casdorph, Republicans, Negroes, and Progressives, 11-12 (all three quotes included).

⁸Casdorph, History of the Republican Party in Texas, 61-62, 67

for the new delegation, they favored William McKinley.⁹ From that point, the Texas Republican party became poised for new leadership.

For the African-American Republicans, their control over party politics had passed. Long attached to Lincoln's party, they found it difficult to separate themselves from that party even as times changed and became more problematic. The McKinley administration, as well as those of Theodore Roosevelt and William H. Taft, however, consistently ignored the provisions of the Fifteenth Amendment and turned their heads as southern Democrats blocked the freedmen's voting rights. Republicans did control Congress, but very few representatives from the South sat in the nation's legislative chambers and championed the cause of African Americans. Thus, both the blacks and the southern GOP found themselves in difficult straits. Democrats denounced the African Americans, thus eliminating them from state politics. For a while, blacks endured the oppression and remained in a party where they became increasingly unwanted.¹⁰

The influence of African Americans in the Texas GOP gradually ended between 1900 and 1912. During the Roosevelt administration (1901-1909), the president was ambivalent on the "Negro question." He offered some appointments to African Americans, but he also catered to the South's "anti-Negro" attitude. Taft was no more supportive. He refused to allow appointments of blacks in areas where "the race feeling was strong." Taft wrote, "The greatest hope of the Negro has, because he lives chiefly in

⁹Ibid., 65, 67.

¹⁰Casdorph, Republicans, Negroes, and Progressives, 9.

the South, is the friendship and sympathy of the white men with whom he lives in the community.” According to historian Paul Casdorph, Taft clearly abandoned the southern black early in his term of office. As a result, blacks slowly started to drift away from the Republican party.¹¹

During the contest of the 1912 Republican presidential nomination, Taft and Roosevelt made the South a battleground where the African Americans became the ultimate losers. Taft selected Henry F. McGregor of Houston to head his Texas campaign. Roosevelt openly aligned himself with the white faction in the state when he sided with national committeeman and state party chair Cecil A. Lyon of Sherman.¹² Lyon was not only an old Rough Rider, but he was also a leader of the lily-whites in Texas.¹³ Famed African-American educator Booker T. Washington described Lyon as “the most flagrant representative of lily-whiteism in the South.”¹⁴

The situation for black Texans worsened once Taft secured the Republican nomination. Not ready to give up the fight, Roosevelt created the Progressive, or Bull-Moose, Party. In Texas the Bull-Moose faction took on an anti-black attitude, and leaders refused African Americans a voice in the new party.¹⁵ Roosevelt and his progressive followers fought to create a white opposition party in the South. National Republicans hoped to build a viable, alternative coalition in the South that would attract

¹¹Quoted in *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹²Lewis L. Gould, “Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and the Disputed Delegates in 1912: Texas as a Test Case,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 80 (July 1976), 36, 38.

¹³Quoted in Casdorph, *Republicans, Negroes, and Progressives*, 61.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 144.

“responsible whites” previously unwilling to join the GOP because of the lingering stigma of “Black Republicanism.”¹⁶ Lyon’s lily-white policies were very popular and successfully segregated blacks from the Republican party in Texas.¹⁷ Thus, African Americans had moved from being the GOP’s principal electoral resource to an ineffective, easily ignored sector of the voting public.¹⁸

The most significant result of the colossal confrontation between the Roosevelt and Taft forces was that both camps made it virtually impossible for African Americans to continue associating with the Republicans after 1912.¹⁹ This trend became reality seven years later at a partisan barbeque held at Lake Worth, Texas. There the Republicans adopted a resolution that emphatically drew “the color line” and deplored “the growing tendency of Northern politicians to socially equalize white citizens and blacks.”²⁰ During the decades that followed, African Americans were forced to wait for one of the major parties to acknowledge their problems before they possessed any political influence in Texas.

The split in the Republican party between Taft’s forces and Roosevelt’s Bull-Moosers resulted in the election of Democrat Woodrow Wilson to the presidency in

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁷Gould, “Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and the Disputed Delegates,” 36.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Casdorph, *Republicans, Negroes, and Progressives*, vii.

²⁰“Texas Republicans Draw Color Line in Party,” *Dallas Morning News*, September 6, 1919.

1912.²¹ Wilson also secured reelection in 1916. As a result, the Texas GOP had no access to federal patronage; therefore, the party's growth stopped during President Wilson's eight-year tenure in the executive office. As the election of 1920 approached, the Republicans in Texas remained essentially leaderless, and the individual who assumed control would be the one who supported the victor of the presidential race.

When Warren G. Harding won the presidency in 1920, he brought the nation back under a Republican administration. Simultaneously, Texas Republicans came under the control of Rentfro B. Creager of Brownsville, who became the perennial leader of the party in the state from 1920 until his death in 1951. Although under attack at times, he always managed to maintain his authority, and throughout his reign the party functioned according to his design.²²

From the inception of the Creager era, Republicans carried on attitudes toward African Americans that had formed during both the Taft and Roosevelt administrations. In the Dallas Morning News in 1921, Creager, a Bull-Mooser in 1912,²³ stated that with Republicans in Texas had "played at politics" for too long. Finally, he proclaimed, they had decided to "quit playing" and intended to do "real, organized work under unquestioned white leadership." He declared that the state party was "henceforth going to be a white man's party" and that "neither the Republican or any other party [could]

²¹In this presidential election Wilson tallied 219,559 Texas votes, while Roosevelt garnered only 26,755 and Taft 28,853. See Casdorff, Republicans, Negroes, and Progressives, 152.

²²Olien, Token to Triumph, 8

²³Ibid.

work successfully with any other than white leadership.”²⁴ By the beginning of the 1920s, therefore, the Republicans made themselves clear, once and for all, on the “Negro question.”

Creager rose to power in the state Republican party with the help of Frank E. Scobey, a transplanted Texan. Scobey, a longtime personal friend and political ally to Warren G. Harding, hailed from the president’s home state of Ohio. Shut out by local Republicans because he was considered an “outsider,” Scobey turned to Creager, the Republican party state vice-chair, who had been unable to take control of the party ever since he came out in support of the Bull Moose faction in 1912. Much to Scoby’s dismay, when Harding won the election in 1920, the newly elected president turned to Creager for assistance in Texas, not his former political partner. The president realized that Creager was capable of exerting more influence in the state GOP than Scobey. From that point forward, the “Red Fox of the Rio Grande,” as Creager like to be referred, was a major influence with the presidential administrations of Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover. In 1922, Scobey received an appointment as the director of the mint in Denver, where he was still working when Harding died in 1923.²⁵

By 1923, after Creager had secured his position in the Texas GOP as both the state chair and the national committeeman, he was most determined to control all federal appointments in Texas.²⁶ Typically, in patronage matters the president in power, whether

²⁴“Republicans Plan Active Campaign,” Dallas Morning News, December 1, 1921.

²⁵Roger M. Olien, “The Man Who Never Became a Colonel House,” West Texas Historical Yearbook 51 (1975), 13, 17; Olien, Token to Triumph, 4, 6, 16, 23.

²⁶Olien, Token to Triumph, 8-9.

he was Republican or Democrat, allowed the United States Senators or Representatives from each state to suggest to the administration names of individuals they deemed worthy of endorsement in their respective states. Usually, the choice appointments they sought to fill included federal judgeships, federal attorneys, prohibition enforcement officers, U.S. marshalls, customs collectors, and postmasters. When there was not a senator or congressman available to dole out positions, the power then passed to an influential “referee” in the state. These referees then dispensed jobs at home to friends or loyal supporters. Writing in Collier’s magazine, William Shepherd contended that “Being a referee is about as sweet a political job there is in politics,” and as a result they went to all lengths to protect their post.²⁷

The only threat to Creager’s power came from Henry M. Wurzbach of Seguin, who won election as a representative to the U.S. Congress in 1920. Representing the Fourteenth Congressional District of Texas, Wurzbach fully intended to have a voice in the state’s federal appointments, but because of the lack of true Republican support and the alliance between Creager and the President, it became quickly apparent that Creager had much more influence with Harding than the freshman congressman from Texas.²⁸ Wurzbach had relied upon considerable Democratic support in the election. He did not believe he could defeat his opponent as a Democrat, but because of ties with Bexar and Guadalupe County Republicans, he thought he could be elected through the GOP. Born

²⁷William G. Shepherd, “A Job for Jack,” Collier’s 8 (June 15, 1929), 9.

²⁸In the 1920 election, the Fourteenth District consisted of Aransas, Bee, Bexar, Blanco, Comal, Guadalupe, Karnes, Kendall, Nueces, San Patricio, and Wilson Counties. See Casdorph, History of the Republican Party, 118, 124.

in San Antonio, Wurzbach had successfully served as a county judge in Guadalupe County for four consecutive terms until his congressional race in 1920. Observers speculated that he won the seat not because he was Republican, but because of his father's favorable reputation as a former Confederate officer, popular lawyer, and Democrat. In other words, he was elected because he was popular, not because of his politics. Although Wurzbach enjoyed continued reelection to this office until his death in 1931, Creager and his group never worked actively for him because he potentially had the power to weaken their hold on patronage awards. Wurzbach became Creager's "public enemy number one." The "Red Fox of the Rio Grande" always out-manipulated his adversary and emerged victorious, but ultimately the Creager-Wurzbach rivalry probably stunted the growth of the Republican party in Texas for the entire decade.²⁹

With Wurzbach under control, Creager continued to build his power base. He relied upon two things: a permanent Republican party headquarters and a very loyal group of appointed officials. On September 21, 1921, the new official headquarters opened in Dallas, and Creager hired a director, secretary, and typist. Later, he added a full-time accountant as well as extra workers during election years. He also created a Headquarters Committee and used it effectively as a manipulative tool. This committee consisted of seven members, four of whom Creager personally selected.³⁰ He declared that no state of the union needed "a change in political control" more than Texas, and he

²⁹Ibid., 119, 120, 123-24, 140; Shepherd, "Job for Jack," 9; Olien, Token to Triumph, 30-31.

³⁰Olien, Token to Triumph, 16-17.

believed he was implementing a system that would “put Texas in the Republican column within six years.”³¹

Under Creager the Texas GOP appeared to “operate with a strong sense of professionalism” and handled matters “in a generally businesslike way.” The leadership doled out patronage “in a methodical manner.” County GOP organizations made nominations for federal posts, the Headquarters Committee then considered them, and, finally, Creager passed judgment. Texas historian Roger Olien stated, “In Texas the Democratic party continued-and, to a remarkable degree, still continues-to operate with far less permanent and professional organization than its counterparts.” Under Creager’s leadership, not only did the Republicans overcome the “rowdy image” established by their predecessors, but also offered the scattered Texas Republicans an “orderly management” style. He and his associates “made the Republican party seem respectable.”³²

In reality, Creager demonstrated more interest in solidifying his own power base in the state GOP than in building a two-party system in Texas. The rank and file did not choose party leaders; rather, Creager selected them.³³ By appointing the county chairmen, he built a solid and geographically wide contingency. Through them he controlled county conventions and, therefore, the delegations sent to state conventions.

³¹“Republicans Plan Active Campaign,” Dallas Morning News, Dec. 1, 1921.

³²Quoted in Olien, Token to Triumph, 17-18, 28.

³³The Republicans in Texas at that time were not subject to the Terrell Election Law or its modifications, which stated that political parties that had a gubernatorial or senatorial candidate who received 200,000 or more votes in the previous election had to hold a primary in the subsequent election. Only in 1924 and 1932 did the Texas GOP have to conform to outside rules. See Olien, Token to Triumph, 20.

By controlling the state convention, he mastered the GOP in Texas.³⁴ Faithful party worker H. Jack Porter commented that when he attended a state convention, he realized “the average county chair was mainly interested in becoming a postmaster in the event of a Republican victory.”³⁵ Creager even extended appointments to Democrats who were well connected to the Texas press and state Democratic party.³⁶ Some charged Creager with encouraging defeat of his own party in certain counties.³⁷ The national GOP chose not to quarrel with Creager about his tactics, however, because as far as it was concerned, solid votes from the Texas delegation at the national convention was “just as valuable as the votes of delegates from the most deeply-eyed Republican state.”³⁸ With Creager in control, both he and the national organization profited.

As the patronage referee in Texas, Creager did not intend to appoint anyone to office who could challenge him in the “joys and profits of jobpicking.”³⁹ And profitable it was. Creager reportedly set up a plan whereby the appointed officeholders in the state paid a specific amount of money to the Republican organization in Texas. To facilitate these payments, he established an installment plan. Many of the thousands of appointees in the state went through “the very realistic ceremony of signing notes carrying Mr. Creager’s name.”⁴⁰ Across the South, many referees accepted “voluntary contributions”

³⁴Ibid., 20-21.

³⁵H. Jack Porter, “Oral History Interview with H. Jack Porter,” OH 228 (from the Columbia Oral History Collection in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas), 2.

³⁶Olien, Token to Triumph, 28.

³⁷Owen P. White, “High-Handed and Hell-Bent,” Collier’s (June 22, 1929), 8-9.

³⁸Shepherd, “Job for Jack,” 9.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Olien, Token to Triumph, 56.

from patrons, many of whom were soon selected to fill vacant federal positions.⁴¹ Helen Ackenhausen, long-time Republican party headquarters secretary, observed that Creager did not depend on the officeholders for money because he had plenty of moneyed contributors. She admitted that many of his loyal patrons sent contributions to GOP headquarters, but claimed that they did so only because of their gratitude to have their job. They believed that if they helped support the party, then their employment was secure.⁴² Little of this money actually went out to campaigns.⁴³ This system appeared so suspicious that Congress established an investigative commission to examine the process. Ackenhausen claimed that the headquarters had maintained scrupulous records and gladly handed them over to the officials.⁴⁴ Although the commission gave them a clean bill of health, the senator heading the investigation avowed that the “note system of Creager’s is not against the law but there ought to be a law against it.”⁴⁵

Creager and his supporters remained quite satisfied with maintaining the GOP in Texas as a minority party. He did nothing to encourage the rise of a two-party system. Although everyone knew that long-term growth possibilities of the Texas GOP rested on its ability to lure conservatives away from the Democratic party, the Republicans appeared to be in no hurry to do so. At times, however, they hinted at capitalizing on

⁴¹Shepherd, “Job for Jack,” 55.

⁴²Helen Ackenhausen, “Oral Interview with Helen Ackenhausen,” OH 324 (Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas), 18-19.

⁴³Shepherd, “Job for Jack,” 51.

⁴⁴Ackenhausen Interview, 19.

⁴⁵Quoted in Shepherd, “Job for Jack,” 57.

disunity in the Democratic party and developing a “friendly relationship” with the most conservative factions of that group.⁴⁶

Texas Republicans, however, made few serious attempts at achieving electoral success. In a 1922 United States senatorial race, a Democrat, George B. Peddy, ran on the Republican ticket against fellow Democrat Earl Mayfield, who had strong Ku Klux Klan backing.⁴⁷ Creager’s allies dropped their candidate and endorsed Peddy, but he garnered only about one-third of the vote.⁴⁸ In the 1924 governor’s contest, University of Texas professor George Butte ran a close race against Miriam Ferguson. Butte, a Democrat, accepted a nomination from the Republicans, but he immediately renounced their platform. Still, he appealed to many voters in the GOP. He won Dallas County by a margin of more than four thousand votes. Although ultimately unable to oust Ferguson from the governorship, Butte did put forth a very good effort, only losing when he finally conceded to the Fergusons.⁴⁹ One last push for a Republican victory against Ferguson failed when Orville Bullington, despite a respectable showing, lost the governor’s race in 1932.⁵⁰

The only bright spot for the Texas GOP occurred in the 1928 presidential election. For the first time ever, a Republican, Herbert Hoover, carried the state. His

⁴⁶Olien, Token to Triumph, 28-29.

⁴⁷Ibid., 29.

⁴⁸Casdorff, History of the Republican Party, 125.

⁴⁹“Mrs. Ferguson Will Carry Out Pledges”; “No Comment Now,” Dallas Morning News, November 5, 1924; “Declares Butte Votes Thrown Out,” Dallas Morning News, November 6, 1924; “Butte’s Dallas Majority,” Dallas Morning News, November 6, 1924; “Butte Still Confident,” Dallas Morning News, November 7, 1924.

⁵⁰Olien, Token to Triumph, 29.

Democratic opponent, Al Smith, a wet Catholic from New York City, won some of the traditional Republican counties with strong German heritage, such as Bexar and Guadalupe, but many Texans could not overlook the religion and prohibition issues and voted Republican. Although Hoover won the state with approximately 52 percent of the votes, Creager's faction played no role in the victory. Rather, the key to success in 1928 rested in the hands of the "Hoovercrats," citizens with no strict party affiliation. Not impressed with the posturing that took place over appointment power, Hoover declared that his plan was to bypass the patronage referees and seek bipartisan recommendations. Unfortunately for Hoover, the Depression soon hit, and patronage became the least of his worries.⁵¹

From the onset of the Depression through the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the GOP in Texas made no headway toward becoming a serious contender at the polls. The rise of the Democrats and the New Deal after the 1932 presidential election negated any advances or respect gained by the Republican party in the state during the previous decade. For the first time in Texas history, in the presidential race between Hoover and Roosevelt, Republicans failed to carry a single county. The first two years of the New Deal administration proved to be a crucial test for the Texas GOP. The Texas Republicans had no issues to attract Republicans, much less Democrats, so there were little, if any, electoral efforts.⁵² The only hope remaining to state Republicans

⁵¹Ibid., 48; Casdorph, History of the Republican Party, 136; Shepherd, "Job for Jack," 57.

⁵²Casdorph, History of the Republican Party, 144.

was to use this time to create new strategies. Finally, the GOP understood the situation: either become a serious contender or no longer be considered a functioning party.⁵³

Most Texans welcomed the implementation of the New Deal in 1933. Although the Depression descended slowly on Texas, citizens eventually realized that the country had reached a low point, both emotionally and economically. According to historian Lionel Patenaude, Texans traditionally adhered to frontier ethics and refused to believe that any problem existed that individuals could not solve through their own efforts; however, as the nation fell further into dire straits, Texas cities began to suffer also. Citizens across the state saw unprecedented high rates of unemployment, decreasing numbers of building permits, and a drop in morale. When Roosevelt took office in 1933, a majority of Texans supported the relief and recovery measures he offered, particularly those benefiting agriculture.⁵⁴

As the country began experiencing relief from the stranglehold of the Depression, Texas Democrats expected the federal government to begin repealing some of the emergency measures. The Roosevelt administration, however, continued to draft new policies. A large number of conservatives grew uncomfortable with New Deal programs and politics for a variety of reasons. First, numerous Texans disagreed with the new labor legislation. Specifically, they disliked Section 7A of the National Industrial Recovery Act and the provisions of the National Labor Relations Act of 1935. The latter measure extended the rights of collective bargaining and self-organizing to workers.

⁵³Olien, *Token to Triumph*, 5; Casdorph, *History of the Republican Party*, 143.

⁵⁴Lionel V. Patenaude, *Texans, Politics, and the New Deal* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983), 1-2, 4-6.

Southern conservatives had historically favored the owners of business and industry in labor disputes, and they believed that strikes violated the private property rights of owners. As strikes by labor increased near the end of the president's first term, Texans became frustrated with the administration's refusal to intervene in opposition to labor.⁵⁵

Additionally, Texas Democrats expressed concern about the position of Roosevelt's administration regarding African Americans. Large numbers of blacks found employment in New Deal relief programs, and by 1936 they had grown to believe that their political future rested in the hands of the Democratic party. President Roosevelt personally did not concentrate much time on civil rights. For example, he failed to support anti-lynching legislation despite pleading from the African-American community to do so. Some members of his administration and his wife, Eleanor, however, showed much concern for African Americans. This development disquieted conservatives in the South. Historian Roger Biles stated that by 1936, much to the surprise of white, southern Democrats, the party actively solicited black voters. At the Democratic National Convention that year, for the first time party leadership seated African-American delegates and desegregated the press box. Most Texans were further dismayed when convention organizers asked African Americans to offer an invocation to the delegates and a speech on behalf of Roosevelt. According to Biles, as the black vote increased for the Democratic party throughout the 1930s, the white southern vote diminished.⁵⁶

⁵⁵Ibid., 43; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Politics of Upheaval (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), 136-137.

⁵⁶Roger Biles, A New Deal for the American People (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991), 181, 188-189, 191.

The issue that drove a permanent wedge between the southern Democrats and Roosevelt's administration was the Court reform plan in 1937. Many Texans saw the Supreme Court as the last bastion against what they considered to be radical New Deal legislation, so they viewed the "court-packing" plan with suspicion. As a result, they began to draw away from the president and his programs. Patenaude concluded that this measure marked the turning point of Texas's acceptance of New Deal policies.⁵⁷

As the decade advanced, Republicans found new life in anti-New Deal rhetoric and postured themselves to receive disgruntled Democrats and straying Republicans. For years large numbers of Texans voted Republican in presidential elections but generally turned to the Democratic ticket in state and local elections. Sentiments shifted when traditional conservatives, led by Texans, grew weary of the direction of the New Deal.⁵⁸ Some of the "fence-sitters" finally became more interested in the Texas Republican party.⁵⁹

While influential Democratic leaders in Texas, such as John Nance Garner, Sam Rayburn, Hatton Sumners, and Tom Connally, began casting doubts on New Deal policies,⁶⁰ Republicans were even more skeptical and began to see FDR as a dangerous man.⁶¹ Despite the vehement denouncement of the president's policies by both parties, Roosevelt easily carried Texas in the 1936 and 1940 elections. Republican candidate

⁵⁷Patenaude, Texans, Politics, and the New Deal, 43, 159.

⁵⁸Green, Liberal View of Texas Politics, 1.

⁵⁹Alvin H. Lane, "Oral Interview with Alvin H. Lane," OH 217 (from the Columbia Oral History Collection in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas), 2.

⁶⁰Green, Liberal View of Texas Politics, 1.

⁶¹Lane Interview, 2.

Alfred Landon won only two Texas counties, Gillespie and Kendall; and Wendell Willkie, while carrying six counties, still lost by almost 700,000 votes.⁶²

Changes that became evident decades later in Texas politics began during the administration of FDR. Adding to the Texans' disenchantment, the Supreme Court, influenced by the Democratic administration, abolished the white primary in 1944. To make matters worse, in 1948 the national Democratic party accepted a plank in its platform that dealt directly with the rights of African Americans.⁶³ Southern Democrats, dismayed at the liberal direction of their party, began seeking new political opportunities. The Solid South softened. In Texas, the "old guard" GOP, which had contented itself with limiting their faction in the state, found itself challenged by a new body of Republican conservatives determined to create growth in the party, and that group eagerly welcomed any disgruntled Democrats to join them.⁶⁴

The major event of the 1944 presidential campaign concerned the formation of the Texas Regulars movement, which coalesced around anti-Roosevelt dissenters. While not a Republican group, the Regulars shared similar goals with the Texas GOP. Both organizations, for example, desired the defeat of the Roosevelt-Truman ticket. Thomas E. Dewey, the Republican candidate, attracted more votes in Texas than nominees of recent years, but FDR still ran away with the vote. According to historian Paul Casdorph,

⁶²Casdorph, History of the Republican Party, 148, 154-155.

⁶³Dorene Hughes, "Urbanization and Republican Growth in the South, 1950-1968" (M.A. thesis, North Texas State University, 1975), 4- 5.

⁶⁴Joseph S. Sheldon, "Oral Interview with Joseph S. Sheldon," OH 151 (from the Columbia Oral History Collection in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas), 2.

Dewey's increase in the Republican vote did not reflect a rise in Republican participation; rather, it indicated an intensifying Democratic dissatisfaction with the President.⁶⁵ Although unsuccessful, the Regulars caught the attention of those who were frustrated with the national Democratic party. Most Texans still hesitated to vote Republican, but they realized that they were not going to make any headway either through their traditional party channels or through a revolt within the party. Texas conservatives faced a choice between an increasingly liberal Democratic party and a more conservative Republican party.⁶⁶

In the 1946 congressional elections, the Republicans gained control in both houses of Congress, but not with any help from the Texans. Although they claimed to be the true conservative voice, Texans still hesitated to select Republicans on state or local ballots because of a reluctance to abandon Democratic traditions.⁶⁷ Because of racial politics, a majority of southerners had been Democrat so long that they could not fathom voting Republican. Major polls, however, revealed that 46 percent of all Texans who voted for Roosevelt in 1944 opposed President Truman's nomination by the Democratic party in his first presidential election, and another 18 percent were undecided. Additionally, only 36 percent favored his upcoming nomination in 1948. When the 1948 convention rolled around, however, the full Texas delegation carried instructions to opt for Truman; however, most delegates knew that they would not agree with the party

⁶⁵Casdorff, History of the Republican Party, 159.

⁶⁶"Texas GOP Needs Democrats to Win," The Southern Weekly (February 1, 1947), 9-10.

⁶⁷"Must the Damn Yankees Do the Job Alone?" The Southern Weekly (October 25, 1947), 6.

platform.⁶⁸ The Southern Weekly quoted part of a Dallas Morning News article that observed that Texans no longer possessed national influence, and as long as they remained “in the bag” for the Democrats, the people of the state would continue to hold an empty sack after each election.⁶⁹ The 1948 presidential election did not lead to Texas “going Republican,” but it did establish the state as an important battleground in national elections because the Texas vote could no longer be considered automatic.⁷⁰

Discontented with the stagnation of the state party as well as with Creager’s control, an energetic coalition met on January 9, 1947, with the explicit goal to make Texas a two-party state. These “new Republicans” emerged and formed the Republican Club of Texas, an organization created independently of the Republican party. Although short lived, the Republican Club shook the state GOP at its roots and strongly indicated that many Texas conservatives believed that the party was worth saving. Captain J. F. Lucey, Dallas oilman prominent in national Republican affairs, was named as president of the club. One of the significant immediate effects of the club’s formation on the Texas Republican party was increased infighting, so much so that Creager moved the party headquarters to Houston in an effort to maintain control.⁷¹ Critical of Creager because of his apparent failure to build a strong opposition party, the new Republican Club chose not

⁶⁸“Why More Texans May Vote Republican,” The Southern Weekly (February 8, 1947), 3.

⁶⁹“Why South Has No National Influence,” The Southern Weekly (April 19, 1947), 4.

⁷⁰“Why More Texans May Vote Republican,” The Southern Weekly, 3.

⁷¹Allen Duckworth, “Texas GOP Arms to Halt 1-Party Rule,” Dallas Morning News, January 10, 1947; Ackenhausen Interview, 15.

to invite him or any of his associates to join.⁷² Lucey clearly stated that the club was “not *against* any one man or group of men.” It was “merely *for* the two party system” and the growth of the Republican party in Texas.⁷³ Lucey indicated that his group was, in fact, grateful to the senior statesmen who kept the flame burning for the Texas GOP during the lean years.⁷⁴ Although created separately from the official party organization, Lucey did not believe his club competed with the state GOP; rather, he believed they complemented one another.⁷⁵ For his part, Creager declared that the group was welcome, and he viewed their efforts as praiseworthy. He did warn, however, that any serious attempts to build Republican organization outside the traditional party structure would only create rivalry and strife.⁷⁶ In reality, Texas politics sorely needed competition, especially within the state GOP.⁷⁷

During the late 1940s, trends and statistics showed that without some infusion of energy the Texas Republican party faced possible extinction within twenty-five years.⁷⁸ With this dire prediction as their driving force, approximately fifty Republicans along with a number of anti-New Deal Democrats attended the first meeting of the Republican

⁷²Duckworth, “Texas GOP”; “Creager on the Republican Club of Texas,” Southern Weekly (January 25, 1947), 3.

⁷³Gerald Cullinan, “Republican Activity in Texas,” The Southern Weekly (January 18, 1947), 3; “The Question Box,” Two-party News 1(March 1947), 5, in Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas History Collection, Dallas, Texas.

⁷⁴“What’s It Matter,” Two-party News 1(March 1947), 4, in Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas History Collection, Dallas, Texas.

⁷⁵“Within the Regular Organization,” Two-party News 1(June 1947), 2, in Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas History Collection, Dallas, Texas.

⁷⁶“Creager on the Republican Club of Texas,” The Southern Weekly, 3.

⁷⁷“A Two-Party State,” The Southern Weekly (January 25, 1947), 11.

⁷⁸“Will the Republican Party in Texas Become Extinct?” Two-party News 1(June 1947), 5, in Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas History Collection, Dallas, Texas.

Club.⁷⁹ Their strategy was simple. They knew that they needed to start at the “grassroots” level, so at the heart and soul of the club were “individual ‘cells’ of aggressive Republican sentiment in every precinct of every county in the state.”⁸⁰ Cells, or clubs, consisted of one sponsor and ten members with men, women, or a combination of both making up the membership.⁸¹ Although various women’s Republican groups already existed in the state, the club created a Women’s Division to encourage women to increase their activity in party affairs. All clubs met once a month, except in July and August, and each club member had to lead one meeting a year. The sponsor accepted the responsibility to ensure that the club was sociable, enjoyable, educational, and political.⁸² The Republican Club hoped to break the political monopoly held by Democrats in Texas.⁸³ Leaders encouraged the more energetic members to break away and form new clubs until they wooed the Democrats to their side.⁸⁴ As they moved from county to county drafting new recruits, members heard the phrase, “Boy, I never knew HE was a Republican,” so often that they thought about adopting it as a slogan.⁸⁵

In October 1947, J. F. Lucey died. Without his leadership, the Republican Club of Texas did not survive. As quickly as it began, the club ended. There were, however, some lasting effects, both negative and positive, credited to the club. The very existence

⁷⁹“The Republican Clubs of Texas,” The Southern Weekly (February 22, 1947), 3.

⁸⁰“A Two-Party State,” The Southern Weekly, 11.

⁸¹Cullinan, “Republican Activity in Texas,” The Southern Weekly, 3.

⁸²“Notes for Sponsors,” Two-party News 1 (March 1947), 5, in Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas History Collection, Dallas, Texas.

⁸³“The Republican Club of Texas,” The Southern Weekly, 3.

⁸⁴Cullinan, “Republican Activity in Texas,” The Southern Weekly, 3.

⁸⁵“Within the Regular Organization,” The Southern Weekly, 2.

of the clubs caused a great deal of friction among state Republicans because the new group welcomed dissatisfied Democrats into their fold, while the old guard viewed this tactic as “selling out.” As a result, Republican Club members never reached their full potential because they worried constantly about threats from other Republicans in the state. The Club did prove, however, an apparently intense desire by many conservatives to make the two-party system work in the state. Members of the Republican Club claimed to want harmony, but at the same time they wanted the state GOP to be capable of growth and not be “merely a plaything for the private use of a few self-serving individuals.”⁸⁶

In 1948, Democrats in the state engaged in an intra-party struggle, inadvertently giving Texas Republicans an opportunity to challenge for an important office. One of Texas’s most ferocious election squabbles occurred in the primary race between former Governor Coke Stevenson and Congressman Lyndon Johnson, who were running for a U.S. Senate seat.⁸⁷ Their attacks on one another became so vicious that a large number of voters refused to support either man in the general election. The free-swinging contest within the Democratic party, therefore, gave Texas Republicans an opportunity to win the seat if they could muster enough support.⁸⁸ The state GOP sought a candidate, but they had not groomed any one person for such an important contest. There simply was not one viable candidate who was widely known throughout the Texas GOP. Jack Porter,

⁸⁶ “Why Fight?” Two-party News 1 (September 1947), 4, in Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas History Collection, Dallas, Texas.

⁸⁷ Green, Liberal View of Texas Politics, 19.

⁸⁸ Olien, Token to Triumph, 101.

who had recently been placed in charge of candidate recruitment, found himself opposite Johnson in the November election. Porter ran a good race, but Johnson handily won the seat.⁸⁹ The most apparent thing realized by the Republicans was that they needed to increase visibility of potential candidates and develop a grassroots support base. They gained in respectability, but they wanted to also gain in votes. It appeared as though Porter was the man who could put the party in action if ever given the chance.⁹⁰

Several opportunities arose for the Republicans in 1950 when the Texas GOP finally returned a man to the U.S. Congress, and when their long-time leader, R. B. Creager, passed away. In a special election in February of that year, a lone Republican, Ben Guill of Pampa, ran against ten Democrats for a vacant seat to represent the Panhandle. He won election because of a badly divided Democratic party. Although he succeeded with only 20 percent of the vote, Guill was, nevertheless, the first Republican to represent Texas in Washington since Wurzbach's death in 1931. When the regular election rolled around that November, the New York Times picked up the story and reported that Guill's candidacy represented the only contest in Texas in 1950 that had the Democrats scared. The newspaper claimed, "If he wins, it will constitute a tiny but possibly significant resurgence in one of the least expected parts of the nation." Guill failed to retain his congressional seat, but observers noted that had he been a Democrat,

⁸⁹The final tally in the 1948 U.S. Senate race listed 349,665 votes for Porter and 702,985 for Johnson. Although Johnson won easily, Porter gained a larger percentage of the total vote than most Republican candidates had in recent years. He received 32.9 percent of the total vote, and Johnson won 66.2 percent of the total vote. See Richard M. Scammon, ed., America Votes 2: A Handbook of Contemporary American Election Statistics, 1956-1957 (New York: MacMillan Company, 1958), 391.

⁹⁰Ibid., 105.

he probably would have won the race handily. The New York Times reasonably argued that it was still “a fatal handicap to run as a Republican in Texas.”⁹¹

Long-time Texas GOP mentor, R. B. Creager, died on October 28, 1950, and although “old guard” Republicans missed his leadership, his death opened the door to new opportunities for the struggling state party. Changing the image of the party was definitely in order. For years the Democrats had scoffed at the size of the Texas Republican party, often referring to it as a mere “social club.”⁹² Historian Paul Casdorff likened the party to “a fungus growth,” because it appeared to have “no roots in the soil.” Without serious efforts to elect Republicans to office, it would likely continue to be considered a “fungus party.”⁹³ The Texas Republican party desperately needed an image overhaul, and following the death of Creager it received one.

The 1952 presidential election proved to be a pivotal point for Texas Republicans. Ohio Senator Robert A. Taft and General Dwight D. Eisenhower, both very popular candidates in Texas, competed for the nomination. Taft enjoyed a strong, traditional Republican backing and was considered to be the leader of the Republican party on the national level, while Eisenhower had the support of the new Republicans, independents, and a large number of Democrats. The winner would face Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson in the November general election.

⁹¹New York Times, October 29, 1950.

⁹²James McCrory, “Oral Interview with James McCrory,” OH 256 (from the Columbia Oral History Collection in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas), 3.

⁹³Casdorff, History of the Republican Party in Texas, 170.

In Texas, pro-Taft voters, led by national committeeman Henry Zweifel, consisted of old line Republicans who for years had employed any tactic they could contrive in order to gain advantages over their opponents. Most often they played “hide the convention.” Election rules stated that notices for precinct or county conventions had to be posted in a public place so that the general public had access. Often leaders changed the locations or times of Republican meetings at the last minute, and many interested members missed the gathering. When questioned about the lack of notification, party officials typically claimed an “irate Democrat” had probably removed the notice containing the new information. Not surprising, only insiders attended these crucial conventions. To prevent such ploys in the 1952 convention season, the new Republicans made sure the law was clear, but even with this legality under control, the old guard still found room for maneuvering.⁹⁴

Most of Eisenhower’s supporters were “young stalwarts, ambitious people who wanted a change, who thought Eisenhower was the logical man, the only man who could win.”⁹⁵ They had no qualms about Taft, but they did not think he could be elected in Texas. Most Texans agreed that no man with the nickname “Mr. Republican” could ever hope to carry the state in the general election.⁹⁶ The Taft faction resented the Eisenhower camp because so many of Ike’s supporters were not declared Republican voters. Zweifel actually forced the voters in the Republican primaries to sign a controversial loyalty

⁹⁴Porter Interview, 9.

⁹⁵Allan Shivers, “Oral Interview with Allan Shivers,” OH 238 (from the Columbia Oral History Collection in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas) 2.

⁹⁶Lane Interview, 2.

pledge stating, “I am a Republican and I intend to participate in the party’s activities in 1952.” Voters who switched over to vote for Eisenhower in the precinct and county conventions recognized it as a meaningless gesture. They knew that they had no legal obligation to vote a straight Republican ticket in the general election.⁹⁷ A spirited battle for the nomination ensued. Although the process leading up to the national convention was fraught with dissension, the race invigorated the Texas GOP and enticed many independents and lifelong Democrats to vote for the Republican candidate.

The South played a crucial role in the presidential election process of 1952. Taft erroneously decided to follow the approach his father, President William H. Taft, had taken in 1912 regarding the South. At that time, state Republican machines handled the nominating process; therefore, to acquire southern delegates a candidate needed only to secure the commitment of state party leaders. Since Texas had no primary scheduled for the 1952 race, Taft focused his energies on cajoling the members of the state Republican executive committee. In 1951 the national committeeman, Zweifel, rewarded Taft’s efforts and promised him that the Texas delegation would be secured for him in the 1952 presidential nominating convention.⁹⁸

Eisenhower had not even announced his candidacy when Taft crafted his southern strategy. Actually, the General did not officially become a candidate for the presidency until January 1952, and he gave his first speech as a candidate on June 4, 1952, after primaries and conventions had already been held. His campaign staff never believed that

⁹⁷Olien, *Token to Triumph*, 122.

⁹⁸Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier, General of the Army, President-Elect, 1890-1952, Volume I* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 535.

southern voters could be taken lightly, though, so they moved throughout the South during the pre-convention months and mustered sufficient support to make the Taft forces feel uneasy. The time had passed, however, for the Senator to re-evaluate and make a strong push in the South.⁹⁹

The thirty-eight votes of the Texas delegation became of utmost importance to both candidates going into the national nominating convention. Despite Zweifel's promises to Taft, neither candidate could count on the Texans because the state party encountered unresolved disputes that had arisen in the precinct conventions. The perennial party leader, R. B. Creager, usually managed to mediate effectively between factions within the small Republican party in Texas; however, he had passed away in 1950. The old guard, led by Zweifel, and the new Republicans, led by Porter, decided to use the 1952 election as a battle ground in their fight for power.¹⁰⁰

Apparently, Zweifel and his men remained determined to dedicate the Texas delegation to Taft. To this end they planned the precinct conventions in their homes, as they generally had in the past. Some even met in vacant lots. Regardless of where they held the precinct convention, however, Eisenhower's followers found them. To the old guard's surprise, thousands of Ike supporters appeared at these conventions with their pledge cards signed. Overwhelmingly, the new Republicans cast their votes for Eisenhower. In the precinct conventions, Eisenhower reportedly carried the state by a five to one margin. Some have estimated that 80 percent of those at the precinct

⁹⁹Ibid., 530; James T. Patterson, Mr. Republican: A Biography of Robert A. Taft (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972), 543.

¹⁰⁰Patterson, Mr. Republican, 539.

conventions who selected Ike were Democrats. Historically, never more than a couple of thousand people participated at the Republican precinct conventions. In 1952 more than twenty-five thousand attended. The Zweifel forces, in turn, bolted the conventions and held rump conventions. As a result, the two factions compiled two slates of delegates. The entire process repeated itself at the county conventions. Porter successfully orchestrated a coup to overthrow the Republican old guard by using a large number of Democrats bent on supporting Eisenhower.¹⁰¹

The Zweifel group, however, did not panic because they knew that they controlled the state convention. When the Republican state executive committee opened the proceedings at the state convention in Mineral Wells on May 27, 1952, they simply refused to seat any of the Eisenhower delegates. Zweifel declared that the “one-day” Republicans would not take over the Texas Republican party. After much debate, the Eisenhower Republicans, led by Porter, took their turn in bolting a convention. They reconvened across the street and selected their own slate of delegates for the national convention. The Zweifel machine apportioned their delegate count by committing thirty to Taft, four to General Douglas MacArthur, and four to Eisenhower. Porter and the new Republicans devoted thirty-four delegates to Ike and four to Taft.¹⁰²

Despite the controversy, Taft believed that he could count on the Texas vote at the nominating convention; however, Eisenhower’s campaign staff refused to concede the state to the Senator that quickly. In fact, they used Zweifel’s actions to their own

¹⁰¹Lane Interview, 17-18; Ambrose, Eisenhower, 536; Patterson, Mr. Republican, 540.

¹⁰²Ambrose, Eisenhower, 436.

advantage. In a speech given in Dallas prior to the convention on June 21, 1952, Eisenhower likened the antics of the state executive committee to a “Texas steal.” Ike’s forces then heightened the focus on the Texas delegation and declared that if Taft accepted these votes then he would be committing “moral outrage.”¹⁰³

At the opening of the national convention in Chicago, Illinois, neither candidate had a decisive advantage. Taft believed that he had an edge over Eisenhower, but he remained uncomfortable with his position. As the titular leader of the Republican national party, Taft definitely had a strong voice in the proceedings of the convention. Although it appeared that his influence would ensure the seating of the pro-Taft Texans, the disputed delegations loomed as a potential problem. As Eisenhower’s charges of “corrupt politics” and “moral outrage” mounted, Taft could no longer ignore the “Texas problem,” so he offered a compromise. Ike’s coalition, however, needed the commitment of most of the Texas delegates if he stood a chance of winning the nomination, so he took a “no compromise” stand. As representatives from other states began to denounce the actions of the pro-Taft faction in Texas and openly supported Eisenhower’s charges of a “Texas steal,” the Senator’s influence diminished. Taft had to allow the pro-Eisenhower delegation to be seated, and as a result, relinquish Texas. After a floor fight that bordered on violence, Eisenhower won the Republican nomination. Historian Roger Olien said, “No issue was to prove more damaging than the ‘Texas steal’” for Taft.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³Ibid., Patterson, Mr. Republican, 544.

¹⁰⁴Ambrose, Eisenhower, 539-40; Sheldon Interview, 10; Telegram, Oveta Culp Hobby to Mr. M. S. McCorquodale, in “1952 – Eisenhower – Citizens for Advisory Council,” Oveta Culp Hobby Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas; Porter Interview, 6; Patterson, Mr. Republican, 557; Olien, Token to Triumph, 127.

In September 1952 Eisenhower embarked on his first campaign tour. He began his race in the South because he recognized that not only had the southern states helped him secure the nomination, but they would be crucial to achieving a victory in November. In his first “whistle stop” campaign, he visited every state in the South except Mississippi. Determined to break the Solid South, Ike returned to the traditional Democratic stronghold several times throughout his campaign. In an effort to persuade Texas voters to support him, Eisenhower stressed two important issues that involved states’ rights. First, he spoke out in opposition to the Fair Employment Practices Commission. Although he claimed to support civil rights legislation, he declared that the responsibility of governing employment practices should be left up to individual states. Ike stated that he desired to rid the free enterprise system of “artificial legislative controls.”¹⁰⁵

The second issue of great importance involved ownership of the mineral rights of the tidelands, an underwater area that extended two-thirds of a mile off the Texas coastline into the Gulf of Mexico. Despite the fact that his stand could have caused potential problems with northern Republicans, Eisenhower agreed that the Texas tidelands belonged to the state, not the federal government. Most Texans considered this a very serious issue because the federal government claimed ownership of all the tidelands in the Gulf of Mexico. If the federal claims were upheld, then all the oil located in the tidelands belonged to the national government, and Texas would no longer receive the royalties from this natural resource. The issues surrounding the tidelands were

¹⁰⁵ Ambrose, Eisenhower, 531, 550, 567.

emotionally charged for Texans because the proceeds from offshore production were dedicated to the public school system.¹⁰⁶ Most Texans waited to see what the leaders of their party decided to do. Realizing the importance of this issue, Democratic Governor Allan Shivers took the initiative. He went to Springfield, Illinois, and visited Governor Stevenson to ask the Democratic candidate to support the Texans and to assure him that the state would maintain possession of the tidelands. Stevenson answered that he could not support that position. Wyatt Wilson, Stevenson's campaign manager, attended the meeting between the two governors, and he claimed that Shivers urged the Democratic nominee to rethink his position and told him that he could not win the presidency if he refused. According to Wilson, Stevenson replied, "I don't have to win." Shivers then informed Stevenson that although he was a lifelong Democrat, he would not back him in his presidential race. Still undecided when he returned home, Shivers asked the people of Texas their opinion, and 80 percent told him to back Ike. Later, in one of the most difficult decisions Shiver's ever made, he came out in support of Eisenhower. Like-minded Democrats, whom Truman renamed "Shivercrats," flooded to the side of the Republican candidate.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶John R. Knaggs, Two-Party Texas: The John Tower Era, 1961-1984 (Austin: Eakin Press, 1986), 4.

¹⁰⁷Allan Shivers, "Oral Interview with Allan Shivers," April 8, 1966, OH 6 (University Archives, Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas), 5-6; Walter Johnson, et. al., ed., "Let's Talk Sense to the American People," 1952-55, vol. 14 of The Papers of Adlai Stevenson (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), 32-33; Price Daniel, "Oral Interview with Price Daniel," February 25, 1967, OH 349 (University Archives, Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas), 110-111; Ambrose, Eisenhower, 527.

Several influential Democratic leaders and various coalitions pulled together to elect Eisenhower in 1952. In a resolution at the Democratic state convention in Amarillo, the party endorsed Eisenhower. The resolution stated, “We urge every Democrat in Texas to vote and work for the election of Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard Nixon.” Ike’s major Democratic supporters included Shivers, future Senator Price Daniel, and former Governors William P. Hobby, Coke Stevenson, and Dan Moody. The leadership assured Democrats that the party would not be harmed if they crossed over and voted for the Eisenhower-Nixon ticket.¹⁰⁸

Porter, in charge of activating Texas Republicans, urged them to put aside differences that erupted during the convention process and unify the party.¹⁰⁹ As a part of a national strategy, Texas Republican women’s organizations joined the “Womenpower for Eisenhower” campaign providing a grassroots effort that proved invaluable to the election success.¹¹⁰ Oveta Culp Hobby, part-owner of the Houston Post and wife of former Governor Hobby, led the Democrats through the Citizens for Eisenhower

¹⁰⁸Draft of a radio address given by Omar Briggs, Jr., Grayson County Chair for Texas Democrats for Eisenhower, November 3, 1952, in “Denton Eisenhower Fund 1952,” Blanche Wechter Martin Papers, Woman’s Collection, Blagg-Huey Library, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, Texas; Daniel Interview, 110-111.

¹⁰⁹Jack Porter to Members of Republican State Executive Committee and Republican County Chairmen, in “1952 - Eisenhower – Citizens for Advisory Council,” Hobby Papers; “Porter Pledges Forgiveness to G.O.P. Old guard,” Austin American, July 21, 1952.

¹¹⁰Press Release, in “Press Release, March 14, 1956, concerning Womanpower for Eisenhower,” National Federation of Republican Women Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

group.¹¹¹ Governor Shivers led the Shivercrats, speaking and campaigning on behalf of the Republican hopeful. Additionally, for the first time in Texas history, the political parties agreed upon a “cross-filing” system on the November ballots. In this system a candidate could file and be listed on both the Republican and Democratic tickets. Although most of their candidates lost, the Republicans liked cross-filing because it increased their chance to carry the state for Eisenhower. Democrats favored it because in larger areas where they had voting machines the straight party voters and Republicans would pull for Ike and also vote for a long list of Democratic state officials.¹¹² As a result of these combined efforts, Eisenhower carried the state of Texas for the Republican party for the first time since Hoover in 1928.

With this triumph, the Republican party of Texas finally received recognition. In defense of his party, newly-named national committeeman Porter declared that “a lot of people -- give the Democrats for Eisenhower credit -- but we had to man some of their headquarters for ‘em and furnish them their money.” Furthermore, he believed that Ike would have carried Texas without Shivers or the Democrats because of his popularity.¹¹³ In reality it was not a partisan Republican win; rather it was a conservative victory led by Democrats. Some Texans became bitter because Ike appointed Democrats to some of the top patronage positions. The president named Oveta Culp Hobby, for example, as the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare because of her monetary support and her

¹¹¹Telegram, Walter Williams, National Chair for Citizens for Eisenhower-Nixon Committee, to Oveta Culp Hobby, in “1952 – Eisenhower – Citizens for Advisory Council,” Hobby Papers.

¹¹²McCrary Interview, 9.

¹¹³Porter Interview, 26.

role in the Citizens for Eisenhower Committee during the campaign.¹¹⁴ Still, the election had a positive impact on the Texas GOP. It boosted their spirits, membership in their rank and file grew, and they realized that they had a growing grassroots support base in the women's Republican clubs. Most significantly, the old guard was out and the new Republicans controlled the direction of the party.¹¹⁵

Some party members believed that the GOP was on the march at last, but others were unable to let go of past habits. In a letter to the president, a leading old guard faithful informed Eisenhower about Porter's plans for running Republicans against all Democratic congressional candidates in the 1954 election. He argued against that plan because the Democrats who occupied those congressional seats already supported the measures of the administration.¹¹⁶

Another Republican coalition surfaced in October 1953.¹¹⁷ The Crusaders were described as an "idealistic Republican organization" composed of individuals who supposedly wanted no personal gain from politics other than good government.¹¹⁸ Created outside of the official party structure, the Crusaders served as a self-proclaimed watchdog organization that planned to attend precinct conventions to ensure respectable

¹¹⁴Olien, Token to Triumph, 153.

¹¹⁵Shivers Interview, in Eisenhower Library, 27.

¹¹⁶Orville Bullington (immediate past-national committeeman from Texas) to Eisenhower, November 5, 1953, in "Texas Situation, 1953," Leonard W. Hall Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

¹¹⁷Porter to Hall, November 13, 1953, in Ibid.

¹¹⁸Donald C. Fitch, Jr., H.H. McJunkin, and William Burrow to Precinct Chairmen, October 17, 1953, in Ibid.

behavior.¹¹⁹ The Republican party of Texas believed that it needed to grow from within, and the national party agreed. Leonard W. Hall, chair of the Republican National Committee, informed one of the Crusader leaders that although he wanted to encourage all organizations that promoted the Republican agenda, they had to work under the leadership of the established party.¹²⁰ Lyndon Johnson referred to the Texas GOP as “an albatross around the neck of Eisenhower” because of their “obstructionist” tendencies. He claimed that the Democrats had to save the president numerous times from the shackles of his own party.¹²¹ The GOP in Texas needed to coalesce into one ideology and eradicate its own splinter organizations if it ever hoped to be considered a serious contender.

To become a viable opposition party and create a two-party system in the state, Texas Republicans had to elect officials at the state and local levels, not just help elect presidents at the national level. The off-year elections of 1954 gave the conservatives reason to hope. Some Republicans speculated that if Shivers lost the Democratic primary to Ralph Yarborough, they could convince him to run as the Republican gubernatorial candidate. Shivers faced a difficult challenge because he was attempting to serve a third term and because influential Texas Democrats such as Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn had issued a serious warning: any Democrat who supported Eisenhower would never

¹¹⁹“Crusaders,” in “1953 Texas 1,” National Federation of Republican Women Papers.

¹²⁰Hall to William Burrow, November 26, 1953, in “Texas Situation, 1953,” Hall Papers.

¹²¹Newspaper articles from several unidentified newspapers, in Ibid.

again hold office in Texas. All such wishful thinking evaporated when Shivers held off his primary opponent, Yarborough.¹²²

In 1954, Texas Republicans finally elected their own candidate to the United States Congress without help from any outside group. Republican Bruce Alger ran against Democrat Wallace Savage for a seat representing the Fifth District, which included Dallas. To avoid any possible charges of conflict of interest, Savage's law partner, Alvin Lane, resigned his seat as chair of the Republican State Executive Committee.¹²³ While Alger never saw himself as a politician and had never considered running in a political race, he did exactly what it took in order to secure the victory for Republicans in this crucial contest. But as local politicians in Dallas stared at a filing deadline and no candidate to run for the Texas GOP in the November election, they decided Alger, whom they had met through business, might make a good candidate. He was well-spoken, articulate, and a life-long Republican. Taken by surprise at the offer, Alger claimed that "somewhere, I must have nodded instead of saying no."¹²⁴ He took a strong pro-business stand and as a result received financial contributions from insurance men, bankers, and oilmen. Alger wasted no time in planning his strategy. An avid campaigner, he attached himself to Eisenhower, and he worked to convince voters that

¹²²George J. Lyons to Hall, August 25, 1954, in "Texas 1954," Ibid; Shivers Interview, in Eisenhower Library, 29-30; Telegram, Eisenhower to Weldon Hart, December 4, 1956, Box 954, Central Files, President's Personal Files, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

¹²³Minutes, Republican State Executive Committee of Texas, June 14, 1954, in "Texas 1954," Hall Papers; Lane Interview, 37.

¹²⁴Bruce Alger, "Oral Interview with Bruce Alger," June 28, July 6, and July 19, 1984 (Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas History Collection, Dallas, Texas), 19.

the best way to show support for Ike was to elect a congressman who could help him in Washington.¹²⁵ Alger understood that he needed help and a lot of it. He traveled from office to office and door to door introducing himself, but he soon realized that he could not do it alone. In searching for a grassroots task force, he borrowed a lesson learned from the Eisenhower campaign. Alger turned to “womanpower” to assist him in his election.

While the Republican hopeful and the GOP women ran a diligent and determined campaign, the Democrats assumed that the election would be “business as usual.” While the Savage group took the contest lightly, “the Republican ladies took the contest seriously and worked to win.” When the election ended, and Alger emerged as the victor, Olien observed “It was clear that the ladies of Dallas, coupled with apathetic liberal voters, has secured a victory for the Republicans.”¹²⁶ In choosing the women to help, Alger set a precedent for many other candidates in the future. In running his first race for a Texas House seat in 1954, John G. Tower of Wichita Falls said that he employed the “Alger model,” a very aggressive campaign with “few funds but considerable support from housewife volunteers.” Although Tower was unsuccessful in his bid for the legislature, he successfully tapped into a solid and loyal grassroots contingent.¹²⁷

Finally, after years of struggling as a “social club,” the Texas GOP had uncovered a crucial ingredient for success. For decades the Republicans had been satisfied as being

¹²⁵ “Campaign 1954,” Folder #7, Bruce Alger Papers, Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas History Collection, Dallas, Texas.

¹²⁶ Olien, Token to Triumph, 140-141.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 142.

a small, unobtrusive, minority party completely focused on patronage and personal power; however, with the onset of the Depression and New Deal, they were forced to make crucial decisions. As an increasing number of voters grew disenchanted with the Democratic party, Creager's old guard refused to make the significant changes necessary to offer them a home. A large number of conservatives, on the other hand, recognized the benefits of establishing a two-party system in Texas.

Following the development of new Republican interest groups, the party seemed poised for a takeover by new blood. What the new Republicans found, however, was a political organization that appeared to lack roots. While Eisenhower's victory may have been attributed to the Democrats and independents, some bright spots existed for the Republicans. Most significantly, they discovered that they did have roots. For more than forty years, the Republican women in Texas had been organizing. Overlooked for decades by men who were only concerned with their own personal power base, these women had met to share their political concerns with one another. They had learned from the study clubs how to overcome gender discrimination, work for a cause, and create a networking system that would eventually result in political recognition. In 1954, the "Alger model," as it was called, tapped into this valuable human resource and immediately reaped the benefits. Longtime members of the party expressed amazement at how deep the Republican roots ran. The future finally looked bright for both the Texas GOP and its staunch coalition of female volunteers.

CHAPTER 4

GROWING AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

1920-1938

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, the national Republican party championed the cause of women. At a time when the local political scene stifled Texas Republican women, the Republican National Committee (RNC), national conventions, and National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW) extended to those Texas women the vision, education, and opportunity necessary to sustain them as they built a grassroots system. With the passage of the equal suffrage amendment, the major political parties offered women the opportunity to become full partners. While most of their efforts throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s concentrated on activities within the Republican National Committee (RNC), women across the nation also began to organize local Republican women's clubs. In Texas, such clubs formed around the major urban areas. Working independently of one another for years, the clubs eventually joined with the larger national federation in the late 1930s. As part of that national organization, Texas women learned how to build an effective coalition in the GOP at home.

In 1919, on the eve of the national suffrage law, Will H. Hays, chair of the RNC, encouraged women to embrace the vote as soon as it became available in order to express themselves politically. Noting that females would constitute one-half of the party's membership, he reminded male Republicans that "the Republican women come into the

party activity not as women but as voters,” entitled to full participation. He also stressed that the men should not view women’s efforts as “supplementary, ancillary or secondary at all”; rather, the women participated as “units in the party membership” and should be treated equally within the party structure. Hays further asserted that since women represented working members of the party who were not to be “separated or segregated,” men should allow them to be “assimilated and amalgamated.” He concluded by stating his belief that “ultimately we will find in the great woman vote of the nation that same safe, sane and balancing anchorage for this country that she furnishes in the home for the family.”¹

The main objective of American women until 1920 was obtaining the right to vote, and party adherents believed that the GOP deserved “full credit for the national enfranchisement of women.”² In 1916, the Republicans included the first federal suffrage plank in a major party platform when they declared that:

The Republican Party, reaffirming its faith in government of
the people, by the people, for the people, as a measure of justice
to one-half of the adult people in the country, favor the extension

¹“Speech by Will H. Hays, Chair, Republican National Committee, at the Dinner Tendered Him by the Republican Women’s Executive Committee of New York, New York City, December 3, 1919,” National Federation of Republican Women Collection, National Federation of Republican Women Headquarters, Alexandria, Virginia (NFRW Collection).

²“Women and the Republican Party,” in “Women & The GOP,” Oveta Culp Hobby Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

of the suffrage to women, but recognized the right of each state to settle this question for itself.³

From 1913 to 1919 the Democratic party, while in control of both the executive and legislative branches of the federal government, failed to extend voting rights to women despite five successive efforts. Meanwhile, the National Republican Executive Committee met in 1918 and supported a measure to create an advisory committee comprised of women to be assembled for future campaigns.⁴ In May 1919, when the Republicans once again secured control of Congress, they successfully introduced and passed the equal suffrage amendment.⁵

Women's suffrage had never enjoyed a favorable position in Texas. In the one-party, Democratic-led state, the issue appeared to be unpopular with women and men. Organized anti-suffragists argued that not only would women voting destroy the home, but also that vote would "lead to Socialism and to Negro domination of the South." Texas legislators rejected the measure in 1915 and 1917, declaring that the vote for women was only a "fad." In 1918, they extended to women the right to vote in primary elections, but this effectively excluded Republican women because the GOP in Texas had never garnered enough votes to justify holding a primary election. In May 1919, after the women's suffrage amendment passed in the Texas legislature, the measure went before

³Josephine L. Good, The History of Women in Republican National Conventions and Women In The Republican National Committee (Women's Division: Republican National Committee, Washington, D.C., 1963), 8-9.

⁴"Republican Invite Women Into Party," Dallas Morning News, January 23, 1918.

⁵"Women and the Republican Party," Hobby Papers.

Texas voters. Anti-suffragist women mounted a successful campaign to defeat the proposal, which lost by at least 25,000 votes. Within weeks, however, the U.S. Congress passed the suffrage amendment on the federal level. When the process of ratification reached Texas, the state legislature accepted the amendment by a voice vote. Texas held the distinction of being the ninth state of the Union and the first state in the South to ratify the suffrage proposal. The amendment became law in August 1920 when three-fourths of the states approved the measure.⁶ With the vote secured, the Texas GOP doubled in size; however, Republican women were trapped in an anemic party where even their new blood did not offer immediate rejuvenation.

Once women obtained the vote they had to make decisions about how to participate in party politics: they could either run for office, or they could work in the volunteer ranks. Typically, women did not seek office because traditionally they had not been encouraged to follow a career in politics. Most voters could not fathom that “proper” women would want be involved in political squabbles, and they questioned the priorities of a woman who intended to juggle the responsibilities of home and career. Party leaders not only discouraged women from running, they usually refused to offer financial support.⁷

Still, more Texas GOP women involved themselves in party activities than Democratic women, mainly because there were disincentives for Republican men who

⁶A. Elizabeth Taylor, “The Woman Suffrage Movement in Texas,” The Journal of Southern History 17 (May 1951): 207, 209-10, 213-5.

⁷Irwin N. Gertzog and M. Michele Simard, “Women and ‘Hopeless’ Candidacies, Nomination Frequency, 1916-1978,” American Political Quarterly 9 (October 1981): 450.

accepted leadership roles in the minority party. Republican males realized that taking an active role could potentially be a “threat to one’s business,” or that they could be prevented from seeking an elective or appointive office in the future. Thus, most Republican party-affiliated duties, especially at county and precinct levels, fell “by default” to women.⁸ Taking their role in the party structure seriously, five Republican women ran for seats in the United States Congress, albeit unsuccessfully, within sixty years following suffrage. During the same time period, only one Democratic woman sought a congressional office; she, however, succeeded in her attempt.⁹ John Bailey, a long-time Democratic party official, declared that “the only time to run a woman is when things look so bad that your only chance is to do something dramatic.”¹⁰ As these failed attempts demonstrated, the Texas Republican party struggled to survive in a hostile political atmosphere.

The majority of Texas Republican women chose to organize in a more non-threatening manner. Numerous females filled the volunteer ranks, and most fit a similar profile. Borrowing characteristics from both the West and South, Texas Republican women combined western individualism and southern traditionalism when molding their political identity. According to the “code of the West,” men treated women gently,

⁸Janet K. Boles, “The Texas Woman in Politics: Role Model or Mirage?” The Social Science Journal 21 (January 1984): 82.

⁹The Republican women who attempted to gain a congressional seat were: Mrs. P.A. Welty, Thirteenth District (1928); Olive B. Stichter, Fourteenth District (1956); Mrs. William E. Jones, First District (1964); Jane Sumner, Tenth District (1966); and Nancy Judy, Fifth District (1975). The lone Democratic candidate was Barbara Jordan of the Eighteenth District, who won in 1972. See Gertzog and Simard, “Women and ‘Hopeless’ Candidacies,” 461-3.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 451.

admired their intelligence, and allowed them to be autonomous and assertive. The South, on the other hand, retained strong ties to the old Confederacy where women accepted a submissive role to men. The culture of the South, however, played a more dominant role in shaping the political behavior of Texas women. For them, participation in politics became an extension of their domestic duties. According to author Edna Ferber, Republican women of the 1920s exhibited “a combination of brains and heart; of intelligence and intuition; and, of training and human impulse.” Additionally, they were “lady-like, self-effacing, and outwardly submissive.” Malleability was a common trait in the most respected females. The Texas GOP women did not mind the “proverbial lickin’ and stickin’ tasks of campaign organization – addressing envelopes, making telephone calls, and ringing doorbells.” This coalition of “well-educated, middle- to upper-middle-class, politically active, conservative women” first organized during the 1920s and gradually grew into a potentially effective political bloc.¹¹

While Texas women had few opportunities to contribute to the state GOP during the 1920s, they had ample opportunities to learn about politics on the national level. Statements in the 1920 Republican platform welcomed women into “full participation in the affairs of government and the activities of the Republican Party.”¹² At the Republican National Convention, held two months prior to the ratification of the suffrage amendment, women participated in the business of the convention for the first time in the party’s history. Twenty-seven women delegates and 131 women alternates claimed their

¹¹Boles, “Role Model or Mirage?” 79-80, 82, 85; Edna Ferber, “Picture of Ideal Woman in Politics,” Dallas Morning News, June 10, 1920.

¹²“Campaign Manual, 100, 1920 Republican Platform,” NFRW Collection.

place alongside the men.¹³ In his acceptance speech for the Republican nomination, Warren G. Harding urged his party not to “share the apprehension of many men and women as to the danger of this momentous extension of the franchise.” Harding then challenged women to “accept the full responsibility” of their citizenship and give back to “the republic their suffrage and support.”¹⁴ National Republican leadership appeared eager to ensure the right to vote for women before election day in November 1920, hoping for a new contingent of loyal voters.¹⁵

Women’s participation in the national Republican party increased even further during the 1924 election year. Prior to the national nominating convention, the chair of the RNC appointed a committee of twenty to review and recommend rules to the Rules Committee of the 1924 Republican National Convention. Chair John T. Adams named eight women to this committee, including Florence Griswold of Dallas, Texas.¹⁶ Acting upon the committee’s recommendation, the convention adopted a rule instructing each state to provide both a man and a woman to serve on the Republican National Committee.

¹³Good, History of Women in Republican National Conventions and Women in the Republican National Committee, 11.

¹⁴“Campaign Manual, p. 52, Acceptance Speech of Warren G. Harding, Marion, Ohio, July 22, 1920,” NFRW Collection.

¹⁵“Woman Suffrage,” from 1920 Republican Campaign Textbook, 179, in Ibid.

¹⁶In research sources covering this period, women were identified by using the husband’s first name. I attempted to locate the first name of all women; however, there are cases where it was impossible. In sources dealing with the Republican party, Griswold’s name always appears as “Mrs. J. C.” Around the mid-1920s, Florence Young Griswold of Dallas periodically submitted letters to the editor of the Dallas Morning News. The letters typically had a political slant and were well written. Although not written in conjunction with her letters, there were also articles that made reference to a J. C. Griswold in the Dallas newspaper. From these clues, I believe that the first woman from Texas to be recognized as an official participant in the Republican party was Florence Young Griswold.

For the first time in party history, women had achieved equal representation on the RNC.¹⁷

Although she wielded considerably less influence than her fellow Texan, R. B. Creager, Griswold served as the national committeewoman of Texas on the RNC for two terms.¹⁸ Her responsibilities included attending national conventions and working vigorously to help secure a victory for the national ticket in Texas. She also represented the state at RNC meetings where she expressed a point of view that reflected her state's position on the issues of the day. Most importantly, between elections she assumed responsibility for educating the women of her party, increasing their participation, and keeping informed of their organizational efforts.¹⁹ Although the task seemed workable, Texas attitudes made it difficult. Few resources existed across the state for Griswold to access; therefore, she tended to work strictly with the RNC with people who were proud of their Republicanism.

¹⁷Good, History of Women In Republican National Conventions and Women in the Republican National Committee, 15, 17; "Women In The Republican Party: Women in the Republican National Committee," in "Women & The GOP," Hobby Papers; List of the first formal election of women as members of the RNC, NFRW Collection.

¹⁸Sources differ as to the length of Griswold's service in this position. In A History of the Republican Party in Texas 1865-1965, Paul Casdorph claimed that Lena Gay More was elected as national committeewoman in 1928; however, the National Federation of Republican Women Papers included a list entitled "Length of Service of Women Members of the Republican National Committee." It indicated that Griswold served two terms from 1924 to 1932 and that More was not elected until 1932. See "Length of Service of Women Members of the Republican National Committee," in "National Committeewomen," National Federation of Republican Women Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas (NFRW Papers).

¹⁹Bertha Adkins, "Oral Interview with Bertha Adkins," OH 58 (from the Columbia Oral History Collection in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas), 9.

One pocket of activity involving Republican women appeared in central Texas. Ignited by Harry M. Wurzbach's push for a congressional seat, Bexar County women seized the opportunity to organize.²⁰ In September 1920, one month after Congress ratified the suffrage amendment, four women met in San Antonio and discussed plans to create the first Republican women's club in the state. Mrs. R. J. Milburn, Mrs. Frank Wine, Mrs. Alexander Boynton, and Mrs. Jimmy Rue approached Wine's son, attorney Russell B. Wine, and asked him to assist them in their endeavor. These women knew the benefits of organizing, as they were all members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the National Women's Suffrage Party. At this meeting they completed plans for the Republican Women's Club of Bexar County. The first officers of the club included Milburn as president, Mrs. T. J. Nye as first vice-president, Elizabeth Frey as second vice-president, and Rue as secretary. They also named Eleanor Brackenridge as their Honorary Life President. Brackenridge's brother, Colonel George Brackenridge, an influential citizen and owner of the San Antonio News, arranged the organizational ceremony in his sister's home. Recognizing that this was the first Republican women's club in the state, he planned a large celebration. He hired a big brass band and caterers for the event. Wurzbach appeared at the inaugural gathering as an honored guest. Hopes ran high when more than a hundred interested women attended the meeting.²¹

²⁰“Women Organize Republican Club,” San Antonio Express, September 24, 1920.

²¹“Miss Brackenridge Hostess To Republican Women's Club,” San Antonio Express, October 1, 1920.

Members of the Republican Women's Club of Bexar County worked diligently for both congressional hopeful Wurzbach and the Harding-Coolidge ticket. Wurzbach's election to Congress proved that a Republican victory could be achieved through an organized effort, even in Texas. Wurzbach bested his opponent, incumbent Carlos Bee, by more than 3,000 votes.²² As a result, the women's group pledged to continue their work for the party year round. Always a booster of the club, Wurzbach gave members "much credit for his political success" and spoke often at their meetings. Wurzbach enjoyed continued re-election to this seat until his death in 1931. From such humble beginnings, the club soon "boasted a membership of six hundred women."²³

Typically women's political clubs organized around local political campaigns; thus, the club movement spread slowly in Texas because under Creager's leadership, the state GOP failed to support or encourage candidates. Bexar County club members soon realized that they not only had to fight the Democrats, but also Republican leadership, in their fight to secure a win for their candidate. National committeeman Creager actively worked to keep Wurzbach from holding office because he believed that the congressman would intentionally undermine his power base. By 1926, Creager had formed a coalition that met at Republican rallies, and they attempted to dissuade GOP voters from reelecting Wurzbach. An important member of his alliance was Griswold, the acting national committeewoman. Griswold apparently did not take her official duties seriously. She not

²²"Wurzbach's Lead Sufficient; Bee Goes to Capital," San Antonio Express, November 4, 1920.

²³"History of Bexar County Republican Women," in "History of Bexar County/History of Preston West," Texas Federation of Republican Women Historian's

only failed to promote the local Republican ticket for the general election, but also, in aligning with Creager in his campaign against Wurzbach, she worked against the efforts of the Bexar County Republican women. She, too, appeared much more concerned with patronage and prestige than with the advancement of the GOP in Texas. With Creager and Griswold representing the interests of Texas Republicans so poorly, membership numbers in both the state party and the women's clubs increased slowly.²⁴

Other than Wurzbach's contests, the only other state race of interest to women occurred in the 1924 gubernatorial campaign between Republican candidate George Butte and Democrat Miriam Ferguson. A large number of women in Texas became disenchanted with Ferguson when she opposed equal suffrage. After she won the run-off election within her party, Democratic women in large numbers crossed party lines and actively campaigned for the Republican nominee. Unable to admit that they supported the GOP hopeful, they referred to Butte as the "good government" candidate. In a typical election, a Republican candidate received approximately 30,000 votes. Although ultimately unsuccessful in this race, Butte totaled 295,000 votes, most cast by women. Ironically, the state's first female governor reached that office despite opposition from the women's bloc. While the numbers appeared positive for the Republicans, this race also failed to strengthen the party organization because the females who had worked so

Collection, home of Annette Hopkins, San Angelo, Texas (TFRW Historian's Collection, Hopkins).

²⁴Roger Olien, From Token to Triumph: The Texas Republicans Since 1920 (Dallas: SMU Press, 1982), 40.

avidly for the Republican candidate were Democrats doing nothing more than casting a protest vote.²⁵

After the Depression struck in 1929 and the nation embraced Roosevelt's New Deal in 1933, the Texas GOP seemed to be almost non-existent. The only change during in the state party administration during that time came with the election of a new national committeewoman, Lena Gay More of Brownsville, Texas. For the next twenty years, the national committeeman and national committeewoman hailed from the same city. Caught in a tight alliance, More appeared never to oppose the policies of Creager. She served quietly alongside the party leader until his death in 1950. When her political partner died, More immediately resigned her post.²⁶

Throughout the first half of the 1930s the Republican party across the nation remained quiet. After the 1936 election, however, stirrings of activity appeared among the ranks of women. Ever since obtaining the vote, women had organized Republican women's clubs across the nation, much like the one in Bexar County. These clubs generally operated independently with no ties to the party organization or to each other.²⁷ As a result, some women's clubs attempted to establish party policy, while others endorsed Republican candidates in primary contests. Occasionally, club members

²⁵Judith McArthur, "Motherhood and Reform in the New South: Texas Woman's Political Culture in the Progressive Era" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, Austin, 1992), 564.

²⁶Paul Casdorph, A History of the Republican Party in Texas, 1865-1965 (Austin: The Pemberton Press, 1965), 135-6, 141, 146, 152, 158, 166; Olien, Token to Triumph, 111; "Length of Service of Women Members of the Republican National Committee," NFRW Papers.

²⁷Good, History of Women In Republican National Conventions and Women in the Republican National Committee, 23.

crossed party lines and worked for favored Democratic candidates.²⁸ The chair of the National Republican Party, John Hamilton, decided that Republican women's clubs could do more to help strengthen the party if they united. He turned to Marion E. Martin of Maine, assistant to the chair of the RNC and director of women's activities.²⁹ He asked her to investigate the possibility of creating an umbrella organization that would stipulate guidelines for individual clubs and coordinate the women's efforts with the official party leadership of the nation or of their respective state.³⁰

Martin called a meeting of the national committeewomen on November 4, 1937, in Chicago, Illinois. The main purpose was "to discuss the desirability of a federation of women's clubs." The women expressed diverse opinions concerning the decision to federate, for some feared that ultimately the men would attempt to control and direct the efforts of club members. After lengthy debate, they agreed to appoint a committee of seven to meet with Martin and draft a suitable plan for federating. The newly organized committee deferred to Martin, allowing her to work up guidelines for the proposed organization. Despite some objections, the majority agreed to the formation of a national federation.³¹

When organizers wrote the proposed bylaws for the new federation, they included a provision that allowed individual clubs to join the national group if no federation

²⁸"Celebrating 41 Years: Convention Leadership . . . An NFRW Tradition," in "Anna Clara Rice clippings/First Tribute to Women, 1979," TFRW Historian's Collection, Hopkins.

²⁹Martin's title was soon changed to assistant chair of the RNC.

³⁰Good, History of Women In Republican National Conventions and Women in the Republican National Committee, 23.

³¹Ibid.

existed in their state. In order to form a statewide federation, there had to be Republican membership representation in 60 percent of the counties within the state. This did not mean that there had to be a formal club in 60 percent of the counties; rather, it meant that there had to be at least individual members represented at the state level. As long as no state federation formed, then individual local clubs consisting of at least ten members could join the national federation. Martin thought that local clubs that refused to cooperate with their respective state federation should be refused membership in the national federation. She strongly believed that they would be “encouraging competition rather than coordination.” Martin optimistically envisioned that in states where no federation existed, the increased activity of local clubs could prompt the creation of a statewide organization.³²

In Texas no widespread interest in the formation of a state organization existed. The idea of joining the new national federation, however, created interest in Houston. As a result, the Republican Women’s Club of Houston organized on September 3, 1936, and began close contact with the national leadership.³³ A year later the president of the club, Martha Sterns, discussed their attempts to increase membership with Martin. She stated that the Houston club mailed out “welcome” cards each month to new families moving

³²Marion E. Martin to Edna B. Conklin, February 16, 1938, “State Federation & Local Clubs – February 16, 1938,” NFRW Papers; “History of the National Federation of Republican Women,” in Texas Federation of Republican Women, 1993-1994, Leadership Handbook, 67, TFRW Historian’s Collection, Hopkins. Originally the rule stated that 60 percent of the counties had to have membership representation to organize statewide. Later the rule changed so that a state could apply for federation once fifty percent of the counties or 75 percent of the state’s congressional districts could prove membership representation.

³³Republican Women’s Club of Houston pamphlet, “Texas,” NFRW Papers.

into the area. In one month alone they sent out 484 cards. They considered every response to a card a success. The women realistically did not think they would make great strides toward “getting new Republicans lined up,” but they wanted to at least make Democrats aware that someone was working in opposition to them.³⁴

The Houston Club, with thirty-seven paid members on the rolls, eagerly seized the opportunity to become a part of the new national federation. While somewhat disappointed with the numbers, Sterns still believed that the club had great potential. Her goal for Texas Republican women was to gain enough representation across the state so that they could eventually unite in a statewide organization.³⁵

In August 1938, Martin issued one last call to clubs across the nation that wished to be charter members of the new federation. In this letter she repeated the organizers’ guiding principles. First, they advocated unity among the various Republican women’s organizations in order to make full and efficient use of the clubs already in existence. Second, they wanted to create educational programs designed to “help make the women’s work a more potent factor on the national scene.” She also affirmed that enough clubs had sent in their applications to assure the successful formation of a national federation.³⁶

³⁴ Martin to Martha Sterns, Nov. 4, 1937, “NF-1 (a) Texas- Affiliated Clubs 2,” Ibid.

³⁵ Martin to Sterns, February 17, 1938, Ibid.

³⁶ “Celebrating 41 Years,” TFRW Historian’s Collection, Hopkins; Martin to all Republican Women’s Club Presidents, August 13, 1938, “Letter to Club Presidents/Letter #2,” NFRW Papers.

Representatives from twenty-five states attended the first official gathering of the National Federation of Women's Republican Clubs of America (NFWRCA).³⁷ They assembled at the Palmer House in Chicago, Illinois, on September 23 and 24, 1938. At the charter meeting, eighty-five clubs representing 95,000 Republican women were on hand. At that time, the Democratic Party had no comparable national structure for its women. Representatives proposed and adopted bylaws, and they began charting a course for the direction of the federation. The new president, Mrs. James P. Arneill, Jr., led the delegates from eleven statewide federations and seventy-five individual clubs, including the Republican Women's Club of Houston. Only Texas represented a state from the Solid South. The eleven statewide charter clubs of the NFWRCA were: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Washington, D. C., Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, and New Jersey. The thirteen additional states represented were: Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin.³⁸

Following a successful organizational convention, several other local clubs in Texas quickly decided to join the National Federation. On July 4, 1939, Mrs. Huber Page, President of the Republican Women's Club of Dallas County, applied for membership. Two months later, the Bexar County Republican Women's Club, led by Roxylea Melas, submitted an application to bring sixty-five members to the national fold.

³⁷The name of the organization changed in 1953 to the National Federation of Republican Women.

³⁸"History of the National Federation of Republican Women," TFRW Handbook, 67, and "Celebrating 41 Years," TFRW Historian's Collection, Hopkins.

The Tarrant County Republican Women's Club tendered its application on November 18, 1939.³⁹ Despite the organization of a national federation, Texas Republican women still seemed apathetic toward forming new clubs. By 1940, only five clubs in the state had shown any interest in uniting with the NFWRCA.

In September 1939, Shirley Holmesly, president of the Texas Republican Women's Club of the Seventh Senatorial District in Tyler, wrote to Martin expressing a desire to join the federation. Holmesly complained, however, that she had encountered strong resistance from within her club. She stated that most of the opposition centered on limited finances but indicated that "indifference" was also a major problem. Sterns, of the Houston Club, reiterated those sentiments and complained that the club movement in Texas was "coming along entirely too slowly." Both leaders had previously worked with women's groups, and they pointed out that they knew from their experience in study clubs members accepted new ideas with some reluctance. Sterns added that some women showed interest in the club, but they hesitated to attend meetings because of the family's reputation or "business reasons." They knew that the GOP was unpopular with most Texans, and they also recognized that the majority of the state Republicans remained apathetic because the leadership did not encourage party growth. But the women remained hopeful. They optimistically believed that with a little time and a lot of work

³⁹Applications to join the NFWRCA and Letters of Acceptance, in "Folder 2," NFRW Papers.

the Republican women's club movement would catch on in Texas as it had across the nation.⁴⁰

Although some Texas Republican women seemed disappointed with the slow progress of the club movement in the state, they did not realize how far they had come. Only two decades earlier they had gained equal suffrage. Until 1920 women were not considered official members of the party at the federal level, but once enfranchised, GOP leaders immediately welcomed them into the fold of the National party. Republican women had made small gains during their first decade as voters only to be knocked back by the Depression and the New Deal. Once able to regain their footing, the women began federating on the national level. While Texas women received no encouragement from party leadership to help build the state GOP, they were determined to do so. Wurzbach's 1920s race for a congressional seat represented the only major victory for the Republican party during that period. In his campaigns, women were vital to his success. They organized for him, they campaigned door-to-door, and they turned out the vote. With few opportunities to participate in the official party structure, they continued to meet within the club setting and to learn the basics for building from grassroots from their mentors on the national level.

⁴⁰Martin to Shirley Holmesly, September 23, 1939, and Martin to Sterns, December 28, 1938, "NF-1 (a) Texas – Affiliated Clubs 2," Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

THE COURSE TO STATEWIDE FEDERATION

1938-1955

The years between 1938 and 1955 proved crucial to the growth of both the Republican Women's Clubs and to the state Republican party in general. Although few Texans officially switched party affiliations from the Democrats to the GOP, developments in the state during this time put the Republican organizations in a position to attract new voters. Republican candidates traditionally fared better in campaigns waged around urban areas, and from the late 1930s to the mid-1950s, a booming state economy based on oil production and wartime industries provided a catalyst for an expanding urban population. White middle-class conservatives, many of whom relocated to Texas from other areas of the country, typically resided in the growing cities. Some conservative Texans began to show a greater interest in the state GOP because of a growing unhappiness with the direction of the national Democratic leadership. Specifically, they disliked the increased role of the government borne out of the New Deal programs, the enhanced power of labor, the lack of tax cuts, a growing acceptance of civil rights for blacks, and threats to the ownership of the Texas tidelands. Throughout this seventeen-year period the national Republican party focused on rebuilding, while the state Republicans concentrated on building. In Texas party workers, including members

of the Republican women's clubs, capitalized on the changes occurring and attempted to move closer to implementing a two-party system in the state.¹

Between 1940 and 1955, two major changes occurred in the demographics of Texas that later benefited the Texas GOP. First, a significant rural to urban population shift occurred because of declining agricultural opportunities and increased employment options in major Texas cities. In 1920 rural inhabitants were double the number of residents in the urban areas, and by 1930 almost 60 percent of the people in Texas still hailed from rural areas where the Democratic vote seemed impenetrable. Ten years later, the rural population had decreased by only 5 percent. In 1950, however, the demographics of the state changed dramatically when the urban population soared to 59.8 percent. For the first time in the state's history, urban inhabitants outnumbered the rural residents, a trend that was to continue.²

New residents moved to the cities in record numbers because of abundant employment opportunities, thus prompting the second major change in the state's demographics. Between 1940 and 1950, Dallas grew by 47.4 percent; Houston increased

¹Roger Olien, From Token to Triumph: The Texas Republicans Since 1920 (Dallas: SMU Press, 1982), 195, 198; Ron Tyler, et. al., The New Handbook of Texas (6 Vols., Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1996), V, 533-35, VI, 669-77.

²According to the U.S. Bureau of Census, in 1920 the rural population totaled 3,151,000 and the urban population was 1,513,000. In 1930 the rural population numbered 3,435,000 and the urban population registered 2,389,000. In 1940 the rural figures rose to 3,503,000, while the urban population also increased to 2,911,000. In 1950 the figures vary due to a reconfiguration of data, but the most used totals show the rural population at 3,099,000 and urban at 4,613,000. See U.S. Bureau of Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970: Part 1 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1975), 35.

by 55 percent; and San Antonio expanded by 60.9 percent.³ Petroleum-related businesses and industries multiplied yearly in Dallas and Houston, bringing in a large number of technical and administrative white-collar jobs. The onset of World War II in 1941, however, introduced unprecedented changes to the urban areas. Throughout the 1940s, Texas had fifteen military bases, forty airfields, twenty-one prisoner of war camps, and a naval air station in Corpus Christi. Industry boomed because of defense contracts that totaled \$600 million each year during wartime. The production of ships, airplanes, gasoline, synthetic rubber, steel, and military uniforms provided a plethora of jobs. For example, in Dallas and Fort Worth, aircraft companies alone employed 60,000 workers to construct B-24 bombers. The Texas cities most affected by wartime prosperity more than doubled in population between 1940 and 1950.⁴

State Republicans had historically built their strongest base of support in the urban areas; therefore, as city populations grew, so did interest in the GOP. Despite the economic relief offered by New Deal programs so welcome in the early years of the Depression, many Texans had grown weary of the expanded role of government that occurred as a result of those programs. They specifically did not like the Wagner Act and the subsequent empowerment of organized labor.⁵ The legislation, passed on July 5, 1935, stated that employees had the right to join unions, participate in strikes, and bargain

³In 1950 the population figures were: Dallas-434,462; Houston-596,163; and San Antonio-408,442. See U.S. Bureau of Census, Census of Population, 1950: Characteristics of the Population, Part 43, Texas (Washington, DC: GPO, 1952).

⁴Bureau of Business Research, An Economic Survey of Dallas County (Denton, Texas: College of Business Administration, University of North Texas, June 1949), 3.0201-02.

⁵The Wagner Act was also known as the National Labor Relations Act.

collectively through representative of their own choosing without any interference or coercion by their employers. The law also established a National Labor Relations Board with the power to enforce the provisions of the Act. Liberals labeled the legislation as “labor’s bill of rights,” but conservatives condemned the measure for several reasons. First, the bill failed to provide any specific recourse if a strike resulted in a threat to national security or safety. Second, the conservatives complained because the power of the union appeared to be unlimited and unrestricted. Third, the employers could no longer make unencumbered business decisions. Opposition to the Wagner Act intensified as union membership in the United States jumped from 3,584,000 during the mid-1930s, to 10,201,000 by the early 1940s, and then to 14,395,000 in 1946.⁶ Employers in Dallas reflected that negative attitude as they stood staunchly against unions in order to “minimize costs” and “avoid trouble.”⁷

Many conservatives in Texas, Democrats and Republicans alike, sought for changes to the labor laws, and they received them when a Republican-dominated Congress passed the Labor-Management Relations Act of 1947, more commonly known as the Taft-Hartley Act. Democratic President Harry S Truman vetoed the bill, claiming it was anti-labor, but the Congress, including both senators and fourteen representatives from the Democratic party in Texas, overrode the veto. The Taft-Hartley Act brought

⁶The Statutes at Large of the United States of America from January 1935 to June 1936, Volume 49, Part I: Public Laws (Washington, DC: GPO, 1936), 449, 451-3, 457; Congress and the Nation, 1946-1964: A Review of Government and Politics in the Postwar Years (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Services, 1965), 571-2.

⁷Patricia Evridge Hill, Dallas: The Making of a Modern City (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 131.

several significant changes that caught the interest of Texas conservatives. The measure specified unlawful and unfair practices by unions, thereby limiting the power of labor. It also provided the president with the power to request a court-ordered injunction to stop a strike if he deemed that it threatened national safety or prompted a national emergency. In addition, the act allowed a state to choose to be a “right to work” state where employers could hire applicants regardless of his or her present or future union affiliation.⁸

By the late 1940s, many conservative Texans had grown weary of the liberal domestic policies of the Democratic executive branch, and they began to criticize the administration, thus inching closer to the state GOP. According to historian Carl H. Moneyhon, a large number of the Texans who populated the urban areas tended to live in heterogeneous communities consisting of the middle-class, professionals, and businessmen. Those groups typically favored management over labor and lower taxes. As a result, these voters began to question their loyalty to the Democratic party. Most Texans wanted to see a tax reduction, and believed they would get one when the nation sent a Republican majority to Congress in 1946. They were mistaken. President Truman vetoed Republican bills to cut taxes twice in 1947. Congress failed to override the vetoes, and negative feelings toward the Democratic president resulted.⁹

⁸Congress and the Nation, 1946-1964, 581-4; “‘Slave Labor Bill’ Unjustified Smear in View of Facts,” The Two Party News 1(July 1947), 5, Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas History Collection, Dallas, Texas.

⁹“Tax Bill Veto Message Shows How Far to Expect Presidential ‘Cooperation,’” The Two-Party News 1(August 1947), 5, Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas History Collection, Dallas, Texas; Tyler, et. al, The New Handbook of Texas, V, 533-35; Robert

In addition, Texas conservatives from the Republican and Democratic parties strongly opposed the increased role and acceptance of African Americans in society brought about under the leadership of Roosevelt and Truman. Historian Harvard Sitkoff argued that the New Deal years marked a “watershed” that brought about a “fuller participation of Blacks in American society.” Many conservatives disliked the substantial inclusion of blacks in the federal relief programs, and their disapproval increased throughout the 1930s and 1940s when labor unions, socialists, and communist sympathizers allied themselves with African Americans in their quest for civil rights.¹⁰ Too, they were uncomfortable having large numbers of African Americans switch their allegiance to the Democratic party beginning in 1936. Truman solidified black support when he drafted a “Special Message to the Congress on Civil Rights,” asking for a comprehensive civil rights law, and when he supported a strong civil rights plank in the Democratic national platform in 1948. In 1950 the president used his power when he issued an executive order to desegregate American troops in the Korean War. In addition, southern conservatives, staunch supporters of segregation, were stunned in 1954 when the United States Supreme Court overturned the “separate but equal” doctrine through the Brown v. Topeka Board of Education decision. All these developments

J. Donovan, Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S Truman, 1945-1948 (New York: W W Norton & Company, Inc., 1977), 260-1, 352.

¹⁰Harvard Sitkoff, A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue: The Depression Decade (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), ix, 162-3, 169.

prompted the Texas conservatives to begin questioning their affiliation with the Democratic party.¹¹

On the state level, Texans became alarmed when the federal government seized the California tidelands through a United States Supreme Court decision in the late-1940s. They feared that the Texas tidelands would be next. The tidelands were the permanently submerged lands off the coastline. The land and oil under the water had historically belonged to Texas, and the proceeds from the sale of that oil helped fund the state's public schools. Although no overtures had been made toward the Texas tidelands, most Texans openly opposed the federal acquisition of these territories. Despite this opposition, President Truman refused to agree that the territory rightfully belonged to the state. This proved to be a crucial issue in the state during the 1952 presidential campaign of Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower.¹²

Despite the demographic changes, the unpopular presidential decisions, and the disturbing trends identified during the Democratic administrations of Roosevelt and Truman, the Republican party in Texas remained weak and unable to mount a serious effort to institute a two-party system in the state between 1938 and 1955. Historically, Texans voted Democratic, and most were resistant to change; however, the state GOP threatened to become a more serious contender by the mid-1950s because of changes in

¹¹Robert Weisbrot, Freedom Bound: A History of America's Civil Rights Movement (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 7, 10-1; Donovan, Conflict and Crisis, 352-4.

¹²"Tidelands Case is Major Issue for All Texans," The Two-Party News 1 (August 1947), 5, 7, Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas History Collection, Dallas, Texas.

state party leadership and a growing grassroots support system provided by the Republican women's clubs.

During the lean years from 1938 to 1955, the members of the Republican women's clubs fought to end party stagnation by expanding its membership roles and by educating the voters on the issues. While active on the fringes of Republican party politics for years, Texas women experienced virtual exclusion from official party activities for the first half of the twentieth century. This oversight, however, did not mean that they were not a crucial element in the growth of the party organization in Texas. On the contrary, the Republican women's clubs capitalized on the changes in demographics and the increasing dissatisfaction with the Democratic party to build the grassroots support the struggling party needed to survive and eventually prosper. Recognizing their inferior position in political life, the women nevertheless worked continuously and waited patiently for an opportunity to prove their worth to state leadership. The Texas women slowly organized and actively networked with their counterparts across the nation. They focused on establishing new clubs throughout the state, recruiting support for the party, and advancing the issues of importance to the Republican party. The women expanded their role in late 1940 when an upstart political organization, the new Republican Club of Texas, accepted them as members.

Then, during the 1950s, a time when citizens criticized the Texas GOP for having no significant grassroots operatives, party leaders called upon women for help. In Dwight D. Eisenhower's presidential campaign of 1952, they demonstrated their abilities through "womanpower" as a part of a national strategy. Two years later, GOP stalwarts

summoned them to assist in Bruce Alger's race for the United States Congress, and their efforts proved that women could make a difference on the local, state, and national levels. Their membership numbers increased so dramatically that they formed the Texas Federation of Republican Women in 1955 (TFRW). After years of work through their volunteer corps, the women of the Texas Republican Party were on the verge of becoming a critical link in a chain of party successes.

Texas Republican women initially capitalized on their connection with the National Federation of Women's Republican Clubs of America (NFWRCA) and learned how to work within the larger Republican party structure. From its formation in 1938, the NFWRCA experienced steady and consistent progress. By June 1940 the organization grew from an initial membership of 95,000 to approximately 250,000. The federation remained focused on its primary purpose: to educate women on both the principles of the party and the immediate political issues surrounding them. The NFWRCA watched Congress closely, taking no action when legislators acted favorably on the bills in which they had an interest. If, however, Congress's actions displeased the NFWRCA, then members sprang into action.¹³

For example, on three occasions by 1940, when the federation wanted to make its opinions known, leaders of the coalition instructed members across the nation to write public officials to express their views. The first issue concerned the Wagner Act. Like

¹³Minutes of the Meeting of the Advisory Committee of the National Federation of Women's Republican Clubs in America held at the close of the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, June 29, 1940, at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel. See National Federation of Republican Women's Collection, National Federation of Republican Women's Headquarters, Alexandria, Virginia (NFRW Collection).

their male counterparts, Republican women typically favored the property rights of business and industrial owners over the rights of workers, and they believed that the legislation gave labor too much power. The organization pushed for a full investigation of the administration of the act and supported legislative amendments that would strengthen the position of employers. A second issue involved their trepidation over the national debt. The women were concerned because deficit spending and the public debt had reached unprecedented proportions by the 1940s. In order to counteract the Depression, President Roosevelt had resorted to deficit spending to fund New Deal programs. During the first year of the New Deal, such spending totaled \$2,601,652 and the national debt amounted to \$22,538,673. By 1941, deficit spending increased to \$6,159,272 and the national debt grew to \$48,961,444. Although most Americans initially recognized this economic program as a pragmatic response to the crisis, critics grew fearful of unending deficits. NFWRCA leaders urged club members to contact their representatives and senators during National Debt Week to “impress them anew with the fact that their constituents were seriously concerned over the national debt.” The last issue centered on international affairs. As America’s traditional allies in Europe resisted German aggression, the national federation leadership asked women to implore Congress to remain in session throughout the crisis. They perceived a threat to U.S. democracy if European powers failed to halt the German advance.¹⁴

¹⁴Ibid.; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1960), 711; James D. Savage, Balanced Budgets and American Politics (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 165, 173.

On the state level, the NFRWCA corresponded frequently with the individual Texas clubs and often provided them with the only support they received. In addition to working together to support favorable legislation, the national federation sent copies of monthly educational programs, materials, and suggestions to each club. Delegates from Texas clubs attended each national biennial convention, except in 1942 when the emergencies of World War II precluded them from meeting. Often, leaders of the Texas clubs sought advice from both the Federation president and the leader of the women's division of the national party when they experienced difficulties in their organizations.¹⁵

Typically, the only opportunities Texas women had to rally around their party occurred during presidential election years. While they realized a temporary surge in participation around election time, their numbers waned during the years between campaigns. At times, their primary goal was "to hold the party together."¹⁶ In 1940 they received encouragement during the presidential campaign of Wendell Willkie. At a time when many conservatives were becoming more critical of the New Deal and European nations engaged in bitter warfare, Willkie launched his campaign. He declared that his prime motivation was to protect American citizens from the encroachments of the federal government and foreign powers. The Republican nominee gave a rousing speech before the First Biennial Convention of the National Federation, declaring that his campaign was

¹⁵"NFRW Convention History," Program for the 25th Biennial Convention of the NFRW, October 6-8, 1989, Baltimore, Maryland, in "Lou Brown Invocation/NFRW 1989," Texas Federation of Republican Women's Historians Collection, in the home of Annette Hopkins, San Angelo, Texas (TFRW Historian's Collection, Hopkins).

¹⁶"History of Bexar County Republican Women," in "History of Bexar County/History of Preston West," TFRW Historian's Collection, Hopkins.

“a crusade that cannot be fought without the help of every woman in America.” He won their hearts, but lost the election.¹⁷ The 1944 and 1948 Republican presidential nominee Thomas Dewey also addressed the convention.¹⁸ Although wartime travel difficulties continued into 1948, more than 10,000 federation members converged in Louisville and overflowed the city’s largest meeting hall as Republican women united in record numbers.¹⁹ Optimism ran high as the pollsters called the race in 1948 for Dewey; however, he lost once again in his presidential bid.²⁰

Women received the most attention and recognition at the Republican party national conventions. Each year their delegates increased in numbers, and their duties multiplied. In 1940, the convention seated seventy-eight women delegates and 231 female alternates. The convention decided that in subsequent years women would be entitled to equal representation with men on all committees at the conventions. At the 1944 gathering, women increased their delegate count to 100 with 268 alternates. Also that year, Clare Boothe Luce, congresswoman from Connecticut, became the first woman to deliver a formal address at a Republican Convention since 1892. By 1948 the convention featured 112 female delegates and 254 alternates. Four women gave formal

¹⁷Donald Bruce Johnson, The Republican Party and Wendell Willkie (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1960), 43, 67; Willkie obtained 44.8 percent of the vote against President Roosevelt in the 1940 race. See Congressional Quarterly’s Guide to U.S. Elections, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1994), 455.

¹⁸“NFRW Convention History,” TFRW Historian’s Collection, Hopkins.

¹⁹“Celebrating 41 Years: Convention Leadership . . . An NFRW Tradition,” in “Anna Clara Rice clippings/First Tribute to Women, 1979,” TFRW Historian’s Collection, Hopkins.

²⁰Gary A. Donaldson, Truman Defeats Dewey (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1999), 204, 209; Dewey received 45.9 percent of the vote against

addresses, and for the first time in history, a woman offered a nominating speech on behalf of a presidential candidate. In another first, a female served as the secretary of the convention.²¹ Throughout the 1950s, women's participation at the conventions increased as they continued to assume duties traditionally held by men.

As the national Republican leadership welcomed an expanded role for women in party activities, Texas women expected the state GOP to reflect these changes. That group, however, lagged behind.²² R. B. Creager, national committeeman from Texas and leader of the state GOP, refused to encourage Republicans to run for office. When candidates did seek office, they received little support from the state party. Creager enjoyed the power that ruling over a small party offered him. Displeased with such inactivity, the Bexar County Republican Women's Club attempted to stir up interest in the Texas GOP. In 1939 they hosted a "Days of Prosperity" gala and encouraged guests to wear something from "before the crash." They chose this idea "with the hope that 1940 will bring, if not a return of fashions, a genuine prosperity for all."²³ Despite their optimism, prosperity was not just around the corner. As a matter of fact, the women's clubs struggled merely to survive.

President Roosevelt in 1944 and 45.1 percent of the vote in 1948 against President Harry S Truman. See *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections*, 456-7.

²¹ "NFRW Convention History," TFRW Historian's Collection, Hopkins.

²² "Women in Republican National Conventions," in "Women & the GOP," Oveta Culp Hobby Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

²³ "Report on activities of Bexar County Republican Women," in "NF-1 (a) Texas – Affiliated Clubs 2," National Federation of Republican Women's Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas (NFRW Papers).

While members believed that they had made the right decision in federating with the NFRWCA, membership in the national group did not immediately lead to organizing a state federation in Texas. The paucity of candidates throughout the state resulted in a lack of growth for the women's clubs. It was common practice in the nation during 1940s for various clubs to form in support of individual candidates, but very few clubs did so in Texas because of the general voter apathy toward Republican candidates. In 1944, however, a group of Texas women organized the Dewey-Bricker Women's Club and joined the national federation during the presidential race of Thomas Dewey and his running mate, John Bricker, but disbanded following the campaign. Hoping to lure disgruntled Democrats to their side, organizers of the Dewey-Bricker Women's Club hesitated to attach the Republican label to their club's name.²⁴ Only four other Republican women's clubs formed and joined the national federation during the 1940s. The seventy-five-member Seventh Senatorial District Republican Women's Club finally agreed to join the NFWRCA on March 11, 1940, despite concerns from members over the cost. Most of the prospective members did not believe that joining the national federation was a wise investment because Republicans held so little influence in Texas; however, they acquiesced. Within three months the Women's Republican Club of Cameron County submitted an application for twenty-five members, and the Hidalgo

²⁴Application for membership, Dewey-Bricker Women's Club, July 29, 1944; Beatrice Hoover to Mrs. Naamin Jackson, Treasurer, NFRWCA, July 16, 1945, in "Folder 1," NFRW Papers.

County Republican Women's Club came in with fourteen new members. A second club from Houston, the Good Government Group, also organized during the 1940s.²⁵

Texas GOP women's clubs struggled to survive throughout the 1940s. Once the United States entered World War II in December 1941, most Texans, Republican and Democrat alike, focused their efforts on the ensuing overseas conflict. Because of the lack of interest and lack of GOP candidates in state and local races, club members fell into arguments involving personality conflicts, program agendas, and club leadership roles. The Houston RWC, the first club in the state to join the NFWRCA, experienced a decline in membership by 1943 due to these types of problems. In an attempt to encourage growth in the club, several women chauffeured members and potential members in their own cars to club meetings. Despite the efforts of several determined club members who desperately wanted to continue building the group, the Houston RWC still lost members. Although they boasted a membership of almost one hundred members in January 1942, by May 1943 only about a dozen could be counted on to take an important role in the programs.²⁶

The majority of the problems centered on personal issues between Martha Sterns, founder of the Houston club and current vice-chair of the Republican party in Texas, and newer club members who had more recently come into the fold. Petty arguments ensued involving the balance of time allowed between the presentation of the program and the

²⁵Applications for membership, in "NF-1 (a) Texas – Affiliated Clubs 2"; Applications for membership, in "Folder 1," NFRW Papers.

²⁶Bessy Cummings to Marion E. Martin, May 15, 1943; Martin to Irene Osborne, August 10, 1943; Martin to Cummings, August 10, 1943; and Cummings to Martin, September 7, 1943, "NF-1 (a) Texas – Affiliated Clubs 1," NFRW Papers.

presentation of refreshments. Disgruntled members longed for additional political education. A power struggle followed between club members who had no reason to unite for a single cause. Bessy Cummings, vice-president of the club, wrote to the federation leadership soliciting advice on how to handle the “domination” that seemed to be “galling and unfair.” In response, Marion Martin, director of the women’s division of the Republican party, attributed the lack of harmony to personalities and suggested that these types of problems be worked out locally without the interference of a national officer. She suggested in her letter, and in a later letter to the president of the club, Irene Osborne, that often it was advisable to have more than one club in a community. She claimed that with the gasoline shortage and transportation problems, many clubs in cities with high populations split their larger organizations into smaller, more workable groups.²⁷

In an attempt to reduce conflict, Cummings organized the Good Government Group of Houston with twenty charter members. They deliberately chose to leave the word Republican out of their club’s name because some of their members were anti-fourth term Democrats, who stated their desire to vote for the Republican nominee simply to avoid the reelection of the president. Others believed the Republican Women’s Club of Houston to be too social, so they joined the Good Government Group because they wanted to be a part of a study club with a political nature. While members realized that, despite its innocuous name, the club belonged to the national Republican women’s organization, they still hesitated to join a group with “Republican” in the title because

²⁷Ibid.

they feared business discrimination if their political inclinations became public knowledge. In fact, the club included several unlisted members married to prominent Houston men.²⁸

The Good Government Group managed to create a second club in the city without threatening the survival of the first and set a precedent in the state. Women in other large cities began to create multiple clubs in a single area. Typically, though, they did so for convenience, not because of petty arguments. By 1945, the original Republican Woman's Club in Houston offered evidence not only of survival but also of strength, and it once again served as an example to other clubs in the state. Although attendance at their meetings averaged about twenty, the women boasted 116 members in their official count. They sponsored numerous successful fund raising events and welcomed more than two hundred attendees at their annual Lincoln's Birthday Dinner. That same year, club members elected Sterns, one of the most respected Republican women in the state, as their president.²⁹

In addition to problems within their own clubs, the Texas GOP women also dealt with conflicts that plagued the men of the state party, who constantly jockeyed for power positions. During the Willkie campaign, Dallas women experienced frustration because they could not campaign for any candidates until after the national convention. Sarah Menezes, president of the Dallas County Republican Women's Club and a member for

²⁸Cummings to Jane Hamilton, September 28, 1943, *Ibid.*; Martin to Mrs. W. B. Dooley, January 15, 1942, "Folder 1," NFRW Papers.

²⁹Osborne to Martin, June 13, 1945, "NF-1 (a) Texas - Affiliated Clubs 1," NFRW Papers.

the Texas Republican State Executive Committee, wrote that “all Republicans were requested to be silent and inactive at the beginning of the campaign.” They were forbidden to implement a campaign strategy until after Willkie secured the nomination. Even when freed to work in the race, county political leaders requested that the women “keep in the background.” They were not permitted to activate their forces until they joined with the “no third term” Democrats. Since the women worked best and their clubs grew the most when rallying around a candidate, they believed that such restrictions cheated them of this opportunity. Furthermore, the Dallas women were discouraged because they believed that the party leadership of both the state and county GOP inadvertently caused them to lose potential members.³⁰

Troubles in the San Antonio organization demonstrated the type of problems that other area clubs experienced. During Willkie’s 1940 presidential campaign, several non-partisan Willkie Clubs formed around the state, and when the election was over, women who had discovered a new political fervor decided to attend local meetings of the Republican women’s club. The Bexar County club had difficulty adapting to the influx of new members, and at times the new attendees were so numerous that they could swing votes within the club, thus redirecting the focus of the organization. Long-time members interpreted this as a challenge to their existing structure. In many ways, they mimicked the attitudes of the state GOP leadership. They welcomed new members so long as those members agreed with them on all issues and understood the established chain of command. They were unwilling to compromise with new members. In a letter to a long-

³⁰Sarah C. Menezes to Martin, October 14, 1940, Ibid.

standing member of the Bexar County club, Martin admonished them, stating that the “only real justification of Women’s Republican Clubs is to provide a medium of pursuing a political education.” She once again suggested that if personality conflicts constituted the problem, then they should consider forming smaller groups where they could learn more and thereby become “missionaries for the cause.”³¹

By 1945, the general political scene in San Antonio had deteriorated as several groups of men fought for control over the Bexar County Republicans. The women, however, had learned how to overcome their earlier struggles. Determined to stay out of the larger, male-dominated party conflicts, they continued to work together in order to build from the grassroots. They culled names from poll lists of voters who had been born in Indiana, Illinois, and other states with traditional Republican influences. They then presented these names to election commissioners to be considered as election judges at the county or precinct level. While they toiled diligently from the bottom up, problems at the top persisted.³²

In an attempt to lessen tensions and encourage unity within the county organization, the Bexar County women planned a large dinner for all area Republicans in the summer of 1947. With more than 250 guests in attendance, the fete appeared successful; however, as in most Republican meetings of the day, a melee broke out. Two attendees disrupted the party, shouting “villainous slander toward most respectable State workers.” The women of the club were highly disappointed because for years they had

³¹Lillian M. Whiting to Martin, March 4, 1941 and Martin to Whiting, March 10, 1941, Ibid.

³²Hoover to Mrs. William C. Murphy, Jr., September 26, 1945, Ibid.

intentionally kept all official party affairs and conflicts separate from the business of the women's club. No matter how hard they tried, they found difficulty isolating themselves because the press lumped them all together. They constantly stressed that club membership did not equal participation in party difficulties. Problems within the state GOP organization stunted the growth of the local club, but the women could only wait patiently until "good Democratic actions" prevailed.³³

Finally, in January 1947, Republicans across the state experienced a reprieve from party stagnation. A group of "new Republicans" based in Dallas challenged the "old guard" for control over voters in the state GOP and announced the formation of the Republican Club of Texas. Although it immediately caused controversy, this large-scale factional dispute demonstrated a sign of life for the Republican party. The women of the party were very much in favor of the new organization. While the Texas GOP had never fostered nor appreciated their contributions, the Republican Club of Texas included them as equals. The state chair and founder of the group, J. F. Lucey of Dallas, declared that the Women's Division represented a vital part of the organization. Spouses of prominent men in the Republican Club, including Helen Oehler, Mrs. Ralph Currie, Mrs. John R. Black, Mrs. Walter Rogers, Mrs. W. P. Luce, and Mrs. Alvin H. Lane, attended the charter meeting of the new association. The NFWRCA endorsed both the group and the women's participation within it. The women of Texas waxed enthusiastic, believing that their vision of working in an active, aggressive party had arrived. The leader of the

³³Mrs. L. A. Winship, President of Bexar County Republican Women, to Jane Macauley, Executive Director of NFWRCA, September 3, 1947; Macauley to Winship, September 13, 1947, in *Ibid.*

Women's Division, Helen Oehler of Fort Worth, swept across the state organizing clubs in conjunction with the Republican Club. Its influence, however, fell far short of expectations. In October, as organizers attempted to cut finances, the Women's Division became the first casualty, and the disappointed women realized that they were the most expendable part of the club. Shortly thereafter, Lucey died, and the club died in infancy as well. Although it failed in the long run, the Republican Club gave women a chance to be included in a larger statewide organization. Circumstances once again forced them to wait patiently.³⁴

By 1950 the women in the Texas Republican Party had become discontented. The lack of support from men in charge of party affairs frustrated the women. Often one club, or even one woman, carried the entire political work of the county. Ruthelle Bacon, member of the Republican State Executive Committee (RSEC), declared that she had been carrying out the duties of her Amarillo district alone for years because of an inactive and unwilling state committeeman. She refused to sit idle in a growing district and watch prospective voters automatically join the Democratic party. She noted that not only did

³⁴“March is Kick-off Month, The Two Party News 1 (March 1947), 3 and Jane Macauley to Republican Club of Texas, The Two Party News 1 (March 1947), 2, Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas History Collection, Dallas, Texas; Helen Oehler to Members of the Republican Executive Committee of Dallas County, October 31, 1947, and Oehler to NFWRCA, January 16, 1948, “Texas Public Relations,” NFRW Papers; Oehler to Macauley, January 18, 1949, “NF-1 (a) Texas – Affiliated Clubs 1,” NFRW Papers; Allen Duckworth, “Texas Arms to Halt 1-Party Rule,” Dallas Morning News, January 10, 1947.

the women of the area attack the mundane chores of party life, they did so with no assistance or support from the men.³⁵

Women in the Bexar County club agreed. Club president, Mrs. L. A. Winship, wrote, “We have never at any time had a kind word spoken to us from any Texas Republican power or organization.” Yet, they carried on. They continued meeting because they enjoyed gathering with others who shared their political beliefs. The men in the party ignored them, and if club members talked with anyone outside of the club about the party, it “most often seemed more like a roll in the gutter than meeting with human beings interested in a vital program,” according to Winship. More and more their Republicanism was alienating them from their neighbors. Across the state the women agreed: new leadership was warranted.³⁶

The party underwent a change in command in October 1950 when its long-term leader, R. B. Creager, died. More significant to the women, after approximately twenty years as Texas national committeewoman, Lena Gay More resigned her position. Martha Sterns took the post for a short while, to be replaced by Mrs. John R. Black when Sterns resigned. Both women avidly supported the women’s clubs. Sterns had served as organizer and past president of the Republican Women’s Club of Houston, while Black had work closely with the Dallas women. As early as 1938, when Sterns led her club as the only charter member from Texas to join the NFWRCA, she had expressed a desire to see clubs expand all across the state, enough clubs to create a federation in Texas. She

³⁵Ruthelle Bacon to Mrs. Joseph R. Farrington, January 28, 1950, “Texas – General,” NFRW Papers.

³⁶Winship to Mrs. Farrington, November 3, 1950, Ibid.

realized her goal under the leadership of the new national committeewomen. Prior to 1950 only nine Texas clubs had joined the NFWRCA. From 1950 to 1955, however, at least sixty-four clubs applied for membership with the national federation.³⁷ The committeewomen lobbied to gain the required representation in 50 percent of the counties or 75 percent of the state's congressional districts, enlisting the help of the thirty-one state senatorial district committeewomen and all established women's clubs.³⁸ By 1955, their goal achieved, the Texas clubs united in the Texas Federation of Republican Women (TFRW).

Several successful campaigns in the state in the early 1950s facilitated Sterns's and Black's efforts. In 1952 GOP women across the state rallied their troops to support Dwight D. Eisenhower's presidential contest, and in 1954 the women in Dallas worked closely with Bruce Alger in his fight for a United States congressional seat. Texas historian Roger Olien contended that the women volunteer corps demonstrated through these campaigns that "they were the organizational sinew of the Republican Party." These victories supported his argument that in the Texas GOP "the men raised the money and recruited the candidates," and "the women did the work."³⁹ In both of these races,

³⁷There are too many clubs to mention in the text; however, these organizations were significant to the development of the party in Texas. For a list of the clubs, their nearest major city, the date each federated with the NFRW, and the original number of members, see Table 1 at the conclusion of this chapter.

³⁸Dorothy Hastings to Mrs. Henry C. Stehl, October 25, 1954, "1953 Texas (1)," NFRW Papers.

³⁹Roger Olien, From Token to Triumph: The Texas Republicans Since 1920 (Dallas: SMU Press, 1982), 143.

however, the national federation and the candidates themselves solicited assistance from the women, not the state leadership.

Eisenhower set a political precedent during his 1952 presidential race when he encouraged women to create, implement, and participate in campaign strategies. The official movement, “Womanpower for Eisenhower,” actually came to fruition in the 1956 contest, but modeled itself after a successful program that helped secure the president a victory in his first campaign. Eisenhower worked closely with the NFRW,⁴⁰ and across the nation GOP women launched a membership drive called “Precinct to President.” The program sought to recruit every Republican woman in each state for membership in the national federation. Women waged door-to-door campaigns in their own precincts, urging residents to register to vote and in the process attempted to persuade them to vote for Ike. They manned telephone banks at party headquarters for countless hours, and they assisted in distributing campaign paraphernalia and literature. A national federation news release proclaimed that “if 85 per cent of purchasing power in the country in the hands of women can dictate in which direction the great industries of our nation can expand,” then, most assuredly, “through organizing the woman power of the Republican Party we can impose our will for good candidates and good government from the precinct to the national level.”⁴¹ Eisenhower agreed that precinct work was “vitally important, both in properly informing people in political matters and in winning elections.” He believed that “the enthusiastic cooperation of women is essential if we are to reach every

⁴⁰In 1952 the name of the NFWRCA was officially changed to the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW).

⁴¹“News Release,” March 14, 1956, “News Release,” NFRW Papers.

voter with our story.” After that successful campaign, NFRW officials claimed, “It was the woman power for Eisenhower in 1952 with 52 per cent of the vote” that helped secure his victory.⁴² Finally, the consensus seemed clear. Where strong women’s clubs existed, GOP candidates were more likely elected to office.

Buoyed by Eisenhower’s success and their role in it, the women of the Texas GOP became “professional volunteers” for the party. They proposed “to foster loyalty to the Republican ideals, to cooperate with Republican policy and to disseminate information on governmental and political issues.”⁴³ New clubs formed throughout the state. In Dallas County, women implemented a new strategy by forming a club in every precinct. They believed precinct clubs represented “part of the answer towards enlisting interest and activity among women.” Through this effort they hoped to attract more conservative Democrats into the Republican Party. In response to the new direction from

⁴² Ibid.; when the NFRW stated that “it was the woman power for Eisenhower in 1952 with 52 percent of the vote” that helped secure a victory, they were referring to the fact that women constituted close to 52 percent of the population in the country at that time. According to the 1950 U.S. Census, women made up just over 50 percent of the nation’s population, and, in Texas, women totaled 49.9 percent of the state’s population. Eisenhower actually won the election with 55.1% of the vote nationally and with 53.1 percent of the vote in Texas. In 1956, however, when the NFRW challenged women to help win reelection by garnering 56 percent of the vote in that election year, they referred to a projected margin of victory, not the actual percentage of women in the population. In the 1956 election, Eisenhower actually exceeded their expectations and won 57.4 percent of the votes. For population data, consult U.S. Bureau of Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970: Part 1, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1975), 12, 35. For election statistics, see Richard M. Scammon, ed., America Votes: A Handbook of Contemporary American Election Statistics (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1956), 421; Congressional Quarterly’s Guide to U.S. Elections, 458-9.

⁴³ “First Women’s Republican Precinct Club Is Organized,” Dallas Morning News, October 23, 1953; “GOP Women of Preston West Elect Mrs. Robert C. Kelley,” Dallas Morning News, October 29, 1953.

the Dallas club, Mrs. Henry C. Stehl, Executive Secretary of the NFRW, expressed admiration for the idea of expansion on a precinct basis and wished that the plan would be followed over the country.⁴⁴ In December 1953 at the state committee session held in Austin, the GOP women received praise from an unexpected source when State Chair Alvin Lane of Dallas thanked them for their efforts as volunteers and helping carry Texas for Eisenhower, and then added, “the ladies are powerful.”⁴⁵

The campaign that highlighted the potential of the Texas women in their own state occurred in Dallas when Bruce Alger sought election to the U. S. Congress in 1954. This appeared to be an unattainable goal because there had not been a Republican voted into Congress from Texas in a general election since Wurzbach’s wins in the 1920s. Furthermore, the Democrats ran a popular candidate, Wallace Savage, who had previously represented the city of Dallas as Mayor. Electing Alger to Congress became a priority for the Fifth District in Dallas. The message resounded clearly: if Dallas conservatives expected to support Eisenhower in the presidency, it was “absolutely essential” that they send a Republican to Congress.⁴⁶

With these disadvantages, a victory appeared impossible for the Republicans. But Alger decided to run against the odds. Alger, a real estate developer, believed that the federal bureaucracy had expanded to a dangerous level during the Truman administration,

⁴⁴Bobbie Hughes to Mrs. Carroll D. Kearns, n.d., and Mrs. Henry C. Stehl to Dorothy M. Hastings, November 2, 1954, “1953 Texas (1),” NFRW Papers.

⁴⁵“GOP Women Set Meeting in Dallas, Dallas Morning News, December 8, 1953.

⁴⁶George J. Lyons to Leonard Hall, August 25, 1954, and Alvin H. Lane to Hall, May 20, 1954, in “Texas 1954,” Leonard W. Hall Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

and as a result it slowed down private enterprise and encroached upon the freedoms of individuals and the business community. He believed that Eisenhower could reverse this trend, but the president needed members of Congress who would support executive decisions. Alger firmly believed that Republicans could capture this seat, and to get his message out to the voters, he sought support from the women's clubs. The congressional hopeful had witnessed the hard work and hours of tireless dedication the females put into Eisenhower's race, so he decided to capitalize on the new surge of interest in and enthusiasm for the newly established women's precinct clubs in Dallas in 1954.⁴⁷

Described by Olien as "young, handsome, and articulate," Alger ably drew upon a large volunteer corps of "debutantes and former debutantes."⁴⁸ The candidate proved to be quite effective when he appeared on television in political commercial spots, so he quickly expanded his television time and began running a live segment entitled "Coffee Time with Bruce Alger" every weekday at 9:30 a.m. His target audience consisted of the housewives who filled his volunteer ranks. As he campaigned throughout the city, he encouraged businessmen to tell their wives to tune into his show each morning. The production, which was directed specifically to the women, produced more telephone calls to party headquarters each day than any other campaign strategy. As a result, women requested Alger to speak at their club meetings, both partisan and non-partisan alike. He also spoke in homes where women invited the neighborhood ladies and organized their own "Coffee with Bruce Alger" sessions. Club members undertook a massive door-to-

⁴⁷Bruce Alger, "Oral Interview with Bruce Alger, May 26, 1981" (Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas History Collection, Dallas, Texas), 17-9.

⁴⁸Olien, Token to Triumph, 140.

door campaign for the congressional hopeful, passing out yard signs, Alger Friend cards and folders, and bumper stickers with slogans such as “Back Ike-Vote for Alger for Congress” and “You Liked Ike-Now Support Him.” The women also conducted surveys periodically in order to measure progress. In October 1954, a Dallas County GOP newsletter stressed that the telephone had become the key to victory. In response, women volunteered to make phone calls from headquarters both day and night. Alger also urged his followers to call six acquaintances every day in an effort to increase support for his candidacy.⁴⁹ According to Olien, platoons of women, who were energized by the excitement of the campaign, “effectively carried out a grassroots campaign, backed by telephone squads and canvassing teams.”⁵⁰ Alger declared that he had “never seen any more unselfish and time-consuming effort expended by human beings” than he saw from these women.⁵¹ Many outsiders made jokes, saying that it bordered on “hero-worship,” but Alger maintained that it simply represented the efforts of an efficient team.⁵² Alger found himself continually surprised at the organization and work ethic of the women volunteers. He observed that these “one man gangs” could “call every name in the phone book . . . in a day.”⁵³ As Olien wrote, “the Republican ladies, in short, did shoe-leather politicking for Alger.”⁵⁴

⁴⁹“Campaign Success Stories,” “Folder #7,” Box 1, Bruce Alger Papers, Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas Historical Collection, Dallas, Texas.

⁵⁰Olien, Token to Triumph, 140.

⁵¹Bruce Alger, “Oral Interview with Bruce Alger, May 26, 1981 (Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas Historical Collection, Dallas, Texas), 26.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Bruce Alger, “Oral Interview with Bruce Alger, July 6 and July 19, 1984 (Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas Historical Collection, Dallas, Texas), 33.

⁵⁴Olien, Token to Triumph, 140.

At the polls on November 2, Alger and his coalition triumphed.⁵⁵ For the first time since the 1920s, Texas Republicans sent a representative to Congress. Finally, a Republican grassroots effort won an election in the state, and the Texas GOP women exulted.⁵⁶ The decades of hypothesizing “what we could do if . . .” had ended. In Dallas, the women proved that their talents had merit. The thrill of returning a Republican to Capitol Hill spread like a wildfire in women’s clubs throughout the state. Capitalizing on this success, they created the TFRW within one year.

The NFRW guided the Texas women through the organizational process. As state women’s clubs expanded, the national leadership stressed the need for party workers to volunteer time not just for the club, but for the regular Republican organizations as well. The goal had been to implant the two-party system in the state, but as membership increased, so did the responsibilities. The party needed more women than ever before to inform the electorate about issues of Republican interest. More women were needed to canvass the precinct for registration; more women were needed to serve on the telephone committees; and more women were needed to “serve goodwill on behalf of the Republican Party” on a day-to-day basis. The NFRW pushed the state clubs to organize registration drives for new voters, and it directed them to analyze precinct votes after elections to identify party strengths and weaknesses. The Texas women were committed

⁵⁵Alger secured 52.9 percent of the total with 27,982 votes, and Savage won 47.1 percent with 24,904 votes. See Michael J. Durbin, United States Congressional Elections, 1788-1997: The Official Results of the Elections of the 1st through the 105th Congress (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1998), 602.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 141.

to building and organizing state forces so they would be ready for the 1956 election year.⁵⁷

In April 1955, the Republican women's clubs in Dallas gathered at a conference for women from the Fifteenth Congressional District. With near religious zeal, they reviewed their "missionary progress" and recommended new strategies of "spreading the GOP gospel." The women were determined to break the one-party hold over the state, and they believed that if they built up their organizations, they could accomplish that goal. Dorothy Hastings, vice-chair of the state committee, addressed the group. She asserted that "women of the GOP are going to have to sell Republicanism to women of Texas." Hastings argued that the task should not be difficult because "experienced as they are in thrift and in wise spending, women are natural Republicans."⁵⁸ The women contended that they could make better choices for the party than the current leadership. Allie Mae Currie, state committeewoman from the eighth senatorial district in Dallas, wrote to NFRW president, Mrs. Carroll D. Kearns, and in a confidential note stated that "as more and more women take active part in political party activities we will see less and less 'smoke filled room decisions.'"⁵⁹ To gain more influence, the women needed to unite in a statewide organization. In early 1955, however, they could claim

⁵⁷Minutes to the National Federation of Republican Women Executive Committee and Board of Directors meeting, March 2, 1955, Washington, D. C., "National Federation of Republican Women Executive Committee and Board of Trustees," NFRW Papers.

⁵⁸"GOP Women Spreading 2-Party State Gospel," Dallas Morning News, April 1, 1955.

⁵⁹Allie Mae Currie to Mrs. Carroll D. Kearns, April 11, 1955, "Texas 3," NFRW Papers.

representation in only ten of the state congressional districts, six shy of the required number. Their commitment deepened as the year progressed.

Texas women were emphatic concerning the need for a two-party system in the state. When asked, “Does Texas have a future as a two-party state?”, several prominent Republican women offered varying responses, but all agreed that developing an enhanced role for women in the party structure had strengthened the system within the state. Hastings claimed that the GOP had made “strides from an organizational standpoint, particularly in women’s work.” She pointed with pride to Alger’s victory and offered it as an indication that a second party was up and coming. Mrs. John DuMont, Abilene state committeewoman from the Twenty-Fourth Senatorial District, boasted that the Republican Party was growing rapidly in her area. The first women’s club in that region formed during the summer of 1955 with only ten members. Within two weeks, the club expanded to almost fifty participants. On another note, Mrs. Frank Vance, Hondo State Committeewomen representing the Nineteenth Senatorial District, concluded that the future appeared bright in her area because fundraising attempts there had been successful since 1952, and she believed that growing financial resources reflected a sign of life. She noted an increasing interest in politics among women of that district and declared that they would “make the men think” about the future.⁶⁰

Continuing the positive outlook, Beryl Milburn, president of the Austin Republican Women’s Club, agreed and said that young women actively involved

⁶⁰“Five Declare Texas Now a 2-Party State,” San Antonio Light, October 21, 1955.

themselves in their club and party, and that these females could “carry on in the party for a long time.” She asserted that the political switch made by many Texans in the 1952 presidential race was “permanent and not just for one election,” indicating her faith in the long-term prospects of the party. Finally, Elizabeth Daughtery, state committeewoman for the Eleventh Senatorial District and citizen of Fairfield, strongly averred that the only way to implement a two-party system in Texas was to concentrate on the local level. Stressing that “elections are won and lost at the precinct level,” she echoed the sentiments of many other women’s clubs in the state, as well as the national federation. All agreed to the importance of restructuring the Texas political scene, and this desire fueled their drive toward statewide federation.⁶¹

On August 9, 1955, Hastings informed the presidents of all Republican women’s clubs that they had finally established at least one organization in 75 percent of the congressional districts in Texas and thus were eligible to create the state federation that they had so long desired.⁶² On August 22, all Republican women in the state received official invitations to attend the Texas Conference of Republican Women for the explicit purpose of creating the Texas Federation of Republican Women. The call provided for one delegate per every ten paid members in each club; their dues also had to be current with the NFRW.⁶³ As a result, the Republican women eligible to attend the charter convention represented sixty-four clubs in nineteen congressional districts.⁶⁴ Republican

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Hastings to All Presidents of Republican Women’s Clubs, August 9, 1955, in “Texas (2),” NFRW Papers.

⁶³Hastings to Mrs. Frederick Frank, September 23, 1955, Ibid.

⁶⁴Hastings to Betty Lou Atkins, September 30, 1955, “Texas 1,” NFRW Papers.

national committeeman Jack Porter praised the women's efforts and stated that "the entire state organization is looking forward with keen anticipation to what we know can be achieved by this conference."⁶⁵ Texas was the forty-first state federation to join the national organization.⁶⁶

The Bexar County Republican Women hosted the first Texas Conference of Republican Women at the Plaza Hotel in San Antonio on October 20 and 21. On the opening day of the convention, Katherine Brown, regional director of the NFRW, told the attendees that their efforts "will be the most effective sparkplug Texas has ever had to bring about a 2-party system." She applauded their efforts and reported that Republicans on the national level appreciated the struggle the Texas women had willingly endured. She admitted the difficulty of organizing large numbers of Republican women's clubs in any of the southern states. It was apparent, according to Brown, that the actions of the Texas women and their leaders showed "that they appreciated numbers in politics." Speakers challenged convention participants to step up in 1956 and make their numbers count.⁶⁷

The only contentious issue at the convention concerned leadership of the newly formed TFRW. Delegates nominated two women for the position of president: Aileen

⁶⁵"News Release," August 24, 1955, "Texas 2," NFRW Papers.

⁶⁶Although Texas was the only southern state represented at the charter meeting of the NFRW, by 1955 it lagged behind others. Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia had already established state federations. Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, and South Carolina had representation in the NFRW, but had not yet federated statewide. See Kearns to Mrs. Hargrove Smith, August 9, 1955, "Texas 2," NFRW Papers.

⁶⁷"GOP Women Called to Lead in '56," San Antonio Light, October 20, 1955 and "Continue Ike Crusade, Women Asked," San Antonio Light, October 21, 1955.

O'Callaghan, president of the Bexar County club, and Mrs. John R. Black, the national committeewoman from Dallas. The problem soon solved itself because of a proposed constitutional ruling that would bar persons holding office in the Republican Party from being officers of the TFRW. Since the ruling would have automatically prevented Black from holding office, the national committeewoman avoided controversy and withdrew her name from nomination, leaving O'Callaghan to claim the first presidency of the TFRW. The other elected officers represented a wide geographical spread. The first vice-president, Mrs. Robert C. Kelley, hailed from Dallas, and the second vice-president, Paula Feagin, from Houston. The new third vice-president, Mrs. Heard Florre, represented the city of Fort Worth. Mrs. P. M. Winkler, fourth vice-president of Corpus Christie, Mrs. Sidney C. Farmer, Jr., sixth vice-president of Galveston, Mrs. Conde M. Anderson, recording secretary, of Victoria, and Mrs. A. G. Natwick, treasurer, of Beaumont, all represented the coastal areas. Mrs. George Watt, an Austin native, accepted the office of fifth vice-president, while Abilene resident Maxine Elam became the corresponding secretary.⁶⁸ By drawing leadership from all corners of the state, officials hoped to show the harmony of their statewide organization.

With this convention, the women of the Texas Republican Party realized a goal sought for decades. They struggled for recognition while being shut out of party affairs from the passage of the equal suffrage amendment in 1920 until the mid-1950s. Despite continual frustration, Republican clubwomen in Texas refused to abandon their objective

⁶⁸Aileen O'Callaghan to the National Federation of Republican Women, November 21, 1955, "Texas 2," NFRW Papers.

to organize statewide. They used individual clubs as political training grounds; they studied the issues, formed opinions, and learned from their mentors on the national level; and they learned canvassing and campaigning techniques at a time when no candidates presented themselves. Once focused on the precinct level, they energetically applied all of their finely honed skills. In the successful political races of Eisenhower and Alger in the early 1950s, they finally earned due recognition and began to chart a course to statewide federation. The women of Texas proved to be an effective campaigning force and successfully amassed the support candidates on both a local and national level needed to win. Once eligible to form the TFRW, they immediately initiated the process of building an influential voting bloc. Soon, political hopefuls not only looked to the women for assistance, they also sought official endorsements. Republican candidates needed Republican women in order to win.

Table 1: Texas Republican Women's Clubs Federated With NFRW Prior to 1955

| CLUB NAME | NEAREST MAJOR CITY* | DATE FEDERATED WITH NFRW** | # OF MEMBERS*** |
|--|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| RWC of Houston | Houston | September 23, 1938 | 35 |
| RWC of Dallas County | Dallas | July 4, 1939 | Less than 100 |
| Bexar County RWC | San Antonio | September 30, 1939 | 65 |
| Tarrant County RWC | Fort Worth | November 18, 1939 | Less than 100 |
| 7th District RWC | Tyler | March 11, 1940 | 75 |
| WRC of Cameron County | La Ferria | April 22, 1940 | 25 |
| Hidalgo County RWC | Donna | June 5, 1940 | 14 |
| Good Government Group of Houston | Houston | September 15, 1943 | 20 |
| Dewey-Bricker Women's Club | n.d. | July 29, 1944 | 110 |
| Panhandle WRC | Amarillo | March 27, 1950 | 22 |
| Republican Study Club | Crystal City | June 13, 1953 | 12 |
| Amarillo RWC | Amarillo | July 20, 1953 | 34 |
| Washingon RWC | Houston | July 23, 1953 | 21 |
| Houston RW for Better Government | Houston | July 24, 1953 | 20 |
| RWC of Parker County | Weatherford | August 10, 1953 | 16 |
| RWC of the 13 th Congressional District | Waco | August 19, 1953 | 10 |
| RWC of Crystal City | Crystal City | August 25, 1953 | 17 |
| Greater Irving RWC | Irving | September 24, 1953 | 22 |
| Hidalgo County RWC | McAllen | October 13, 1953 | 50 |
| Precinct 135 | Dallas | n.d. | n.d. |
| Preston West RWC | Dallas | December 1, 1953 | 30 |
| 133 RWC | Dallas | December 8, 1953 | 12 |
| Precinct 131 WRC | Dallas | January 13, 1954 | 25 |
| Smith County RWC | Tyler | March 23, 1954 | 40 |
| RW Study Club of Harris County | Houston | April 6, 1954 | 112 |
| Mid-Park RWC | Dallas | April 9, 1954 | 11 |
| Grand Praire WRC | Grand Prairie | May 24, 1954 | 12 |
| Greenway Parks RWC | Dallas | August 19, 1954 | 10 |
| Greenland Hills RWC | Dallas | August 19, 1954 | 12 |
| Town-Hall RWC | Dallas | August 24, 1954 | 11 |
| Dal-Hollow RWC | Dallas | August 25, 1954 | 14 |
| Lakewood RWC | Dallas | August 31, 1954 | 10 |
| Precinct 124 WRC | Dallas | September 10, 1954 | 10 |
| Kessler RWC | Dallas | September 14, 1954 | 10 |
| WRC of Zavala County | Crystal City | n.d. | n.d. |
| Texas RW | Austin | January 14, 1955 | 23 |
| WRC of the 5 th Senatorial District | Crockett | January 22, 1955 | 17 |
| Lake Jackson RWC | Lake Jackson | April 29, 1955 | 14 |
| Colorado County RWC | Columbus | May 17, 1955 | 23 |
| Highland Park West RWC | Dallas | May 17, 1955 | 11 |
| Trinity Valley RWC | n.d. | May 17, 1955 | 12 |
| The Victoria County RWC | Victoria | May 17, 1955 | 20 |
| Galveston RWC | Galveston | May 19, 1955 | 12 |
| Preston Hollow RWC | Dallas | May 23, 1955 | 12 |
| Beaumont RW | Beaumont | May 25, 1955 | 12 |

| | | | |
|--|----------------|--------------------|----|
| Inwood RWC | Dallas | June 3, 1955 | 12 |
| Hondo RWC | Hondo | June 4, 1955 | 10 |
| Prestoncrest RWC | Dallas | June 4, 1955 | 20 |
| RWC of Lubbock | Lubbock | June, 1955 | 18 |
| Ellis County RWC | Waxahachie | Probably mid-1955 | 12 |
| Better Republicans-Alert, Valient Efficient, & Steadfast (BRAVES) | n.d. | July 8, 195 | 10 |
| Texas City RWC | Texas City | July 8, 1955 | 14 |
| Nacogdoches RWC | Nacogdoches | July 13, 1955 | 10 |
| Abilene RWC | Abilene | July 28, 1955 | 20 |
| Denton County RWC | Denton | July 30, 1955 | 13 |
| Hamilton County RWC | Hamilton | August 4, 1955 | 14 |
| Town-East RWC | Dallas | August 4, 1955 | 24 |
| Walnut Hill RWC | Dallas | August 15, 1955 | 18 |
| WRC of Hereford | Hereford | August 16, 1955 | 16 |
| Cedar Springs RWC | Cedar Springs | August 22, 1955 | 10 |
| Floyd County RWC | Floydada | August 23, 1955 | 10 |
| Lamb County RWC | Littlefield | August 23, 1955 | 13 |
| Coryell County WRC | Gatesville | August 25, 1955 | 10 |
| Gregg and Rusk Counties RWC | Kilgore | August 25, 1955 | 26 |
| Grayson County RWC | Sherman | August 26, 1955 | 16 |
| Republican Business & Professional Women for Conservative Government | Houston | August 29, 1955 | 21 |
| South Plains WRC (Crosby County) | Ralls | August 29, 1955 | 26 |
| RWC of Nueces County | Corpus Christi | August 30, 1955 | 18 |
| Fort Bend County RWC | Richmond | September 8, 1955 | 17 |
| Tilly Austin Republican Club | Houston | September 13, 1955 | 11 |
| RWC of the 23 rd Senatorial District | Wichita Falls | September 26, 1955 | 19 |
| Gillespie County RWC | Fredericksburg | September 27, 1955 | 14 |
| Hillside RWC | n.d. | October 4, 1955 | 16 |

*Most applications included the name of the city where the club first officially formed. Often when the club was formed under the County name, they did not list a city. In these cases, the county seat was used as the nearest major city. In the cases where neither a city nor county name was listed on the application, “no data,” or n.d. was inserted.

**In almost every case, the date listed on the application was used. In a couple of cases the date on the letter of acceptance was used because the application was not in file.

***During the early years of the national federation, the dues to clubs differed only if they had more than 100 members. Therefore on some applications the applicants checked “less than 100” when giving membership figures.

List compiled from data obtained from the following sources located in the NFRW Papers, DDE Library, Abilene, Kansas:

| | |
|--------|---|
| Box 14 | Folder 2; NF-1 (a) Texas – Affiliated Clubs 2 |
| Box 19 | Texas – General |
| Box 34 | 1953 Texas 1; 1953 Texas 2; 1953 Texas 3 |
| Box 41 | Texas 1; Texas 2; Texas 3; Texas 4 |

CHAPTER 6

THE SOFTENING OF DEMOCRATIC SOLIDITY

1956-1968

From 1956 to 1968, the Democratic solidity in Texas gradually softened. At the same time, Republicans in the state faced some of their greatest challenges. In a tumultuous period marked by the rise of the counterculture, the ongoing quest for civil rights by African Americans, the perceived Communist threat, and the escalating crisis in Vietnam, the state GOP appealed to larger numbers of conservative voters in Texas. Throughout this twelve-year period, the Republican women's organizations significantly affected each campaign, from the "darkest hour" of the 1960 presidential campaign to the "finest hour" of the "womanpower" campaigns for John Tower in 1961 and 1966 and for Richard Nixon in 1968. By the end of the decade, the women had helped loosen the almost century-old grasp of the Democratic party on state politics, with the result that the Republicans finally stood on the brink of implementing a two-party system in the state.

As he had in 1952, Eisenhower carried the state once again in the 1956 presidential election, but the financial cost of the race left the Texas GOP in dire straits for years, thus hampering efforts in later campaigns. Despite native son Lyndon B. Johnson's place as vice-president on the Democratic ticket in the 1960 presidential election, Richard M. Nixon came close to carrying the state. The election of John G. Tower to fill a vacated Senate seat in 1961 and gains the Texas GOP picked up in the

1962 off-year election offered the state minority party hope; however, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas on November 22, 1963, cast a dark shadow over the state and Republican party for several years. People across the nation declared that a climate of hate and a distrust of Democrats existed in Texas, especially in Dallas. In reaction to the indictments, Texans overwhelmingly voted Democratic in the 1964 elections and virtually eliminated almost every Republican holding political office. The Texas GOP, however, refused to give up. It continued to place candidates before the voters and, in return, received some modest gains. By 1968, amidst increasing national turbulence, the Texas Republicans regained their momentum of 1962 and made a respectable showing in the elections. The Republicans worked hard for Nixon, and although they failed to secure Texas for the presidential hopeful, once again they came very close. By the close of the 1960s, the Texas GOP finally managed to place Republicans in both houses of Congress on the federal and state levels.¹

During the 1960s, Americans witnessed the birth and subsequent rise of a new counterculture in the United States that created a difficult political situation for both the Republicans and the Democrats. The beats, the hippies, and the New Left participated in a social upheaval marked by rock and roll, peace demonstrations, college sit-ins, draft-card burnings, the psychedelic style, sexual freedom, and rampant drug use. While professing love and peace, these cultural radicals emoted contempt. According to

¹For a general overview of the period from 1956 to 1968, see John G. Tower, Consequences: A Personal and Political Memoir (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), and Roger M. Olien, From Token to Triumph: The Texas Republicans Since 1920 (Dallas: SMU Press, 1982).

historian Allen J. Matusow, they alienated themselves from dominant American values, and they rejected materialism, established authority, competition, sexual repression, hygiene, and the work ethic. Opposed to the war in Vietnam, they vocally protested against the establishment. The movement accelerated existing tensions surrounding the escalating Vietnam War, and American citizens watched in amazement as 50,000 anti-war demonstrators marched on the Pentagon chanting, “Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?”²

African Americans had also grown restless, and they began to organize because of the failure of the federal government to pass any significant civil rights legislation to offer relief from oppression. During the early 1960s, several leaders and coalitions emerged to obtain equal opportunities for the African-American community. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), led a non-violent movement that pushed for the desegregation of public facilities. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) attempted to achieve enhanced political power for blacks, and unlike their name, they sometimes resorted to violent measures. Militant organizations like the Black Panthers and Malcolm X’s Black Muslim nationalists advocated agitation in order to further their quest for equality. Southern white conservatives opposed the efforts of these coalitions, and they often shifted their support away from politicians who responded to the demands of the African Americans.³

²Allen J. Matusow, The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984), 285, 287; Harry G. Summers, Jr., Vietnam War Almanac (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1985), 43.

³Matusow, Unraveling of America, 346, 349, 372.

On questions of civil rights, southern conservatives, including Texans, resented the Democratic-led federal government attempting to extend equal rights to African Americans. A large number regarded integration as a potential catastrophe to race relations and to southern society in general; however, during the 1960s, the push for civil rights legislation forced southern conservatives to accept legally African Americans as equals under the law. After Congress passed weak civil rights measures in 1957 and 1960, the black community demanded that the federal government consider more effective legislation.⁴

Under rising pressure from the African-American community, President John F. Kennedy and his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, drafted a civil rights bill during the summer of 1963 and moved the proposal to the top of the executive officer's priority list.⁵ Personally professing the dream of realizing equality for all Americans, Kennedy's successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, proposed to honor the martyred president's memory by obtaining the earliest possible passage of a civil rights bill. During Kennedy's administration, Johnson urged the president to travel the South to show his commitment to the passage civil rights legislation. The vice-president stated, however,

⁴Ibid.

⁵Congressional Quarterly, Inc., Power in the Congress: Who Has It, How They Got It, How They Use It (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), 63; Congressional Quarterly, Inc., Congressional Quarterly Almanac (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), 343; Matusow, Unraveling of America, 93.

that “the risks are great” when taking a pro-civil rights stand, and that it “might cost [Democrats] the South” in future elections.⁶

The measure proposed closely resembled the document that Kennedy had originated. Title I provided for the enforcement of the constitutional right to vote in federal elections and stipulated that no one should be denied the opportunity to register to vote due to literacy tests or their race. Title II provoked one of the greatest controversies because it eliminated discriminatory practices in places of public accommodations, including all restaurants, soda fountains, motels, gasoline stations, theaters, and sports arenas.⁷

Title III ordered the desegregation of all public facilities and empowered the U.S. Attorney General to use his or her prerogative to intervene directly when presented with written complaints of continuing discrimination. Similarly, Title IV specifically required the United States Department of Education to report within two years all situations concerning the progress achieved in the matter of public school desegregation. As in the previous section, Title IV gave the Attorney General authority to file suit in court on behalf of those unable to seek action through their own initiative.⁸

⁶Lyndon B. Johnson, “Address Before A Joint Session of the Congress, 27 November 1963,” Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), 8-9; Quote from transcription of taping, Lyndon Johnson with Theodore Sorenson, June 3, 1963, p. 4, Ac 66-1, George Reedy Papers, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, Texas; Matusow, Unraveling of America, 94; Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 343; Charles Whalen and Barbara Whalen, The Longest Debate: A Legislative History of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Washington: Seven Locks Press, 1985), 2, 8.

⁷Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 350.

⁸*Ibid.*

Title V transformed the status of the Commission on Civil Rights to that of a permanent agency of the federal government and increased its functions so it could act as a “national clearing house” of civil rights legislation, information, and updates. In Title VI the statute required each federal department or agency to implement the laws concerning non-discrimination, which virtually eliminated discrimination in all federally assisted programs. This provision applied to all companies that received government contracts. These companies initially practiced “voluntary methods of compliance,” but if they failed to meet the required goals, the federal law authorized the United States government to cut their funding.⁹

Title VII, which in later years would become the most “talked-about” provision in the act, established an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission with the power to eliminate discrimination in employment practices on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin.¹⁰ Title VIII required the Census Bureau to gather registration and voting statistics based on race, color, and national origin in order to guarantee equal representation of all citizens in the governmental structure, while Title IX instructed the higher courts to remand civil rights cases to state courts.¹¹

On July 2, 1964, President Johnson signed the bill into law. Johnson declared that his approval of this measure would “dilute the springs of racial poison.” In Texas, as Johnson predicted, however, the passage of the act produced a wellspring of

⁹Ibid., 350-1.

¹⁰Ibid., 351.

¹¹Ibid.

discontentment among the state's conservatives, and, as he feared, Democrats slowly began to defect to the state GOP.¹²

Despite their dissatisfaction with the civil rights issue, however, most Texans agreed with the federal government's stand against Soviet aggression. Feeling increasingly threatened by communist activities since the conclusion of World War II in 1945, most Americans supported Truman's policy of containment in an effort to resist Soviet expansionism. The U.S. government attempted to thwart Russian hegemony politically, economically, and militarily through the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).¹³

Although primarily focused on Europe, the U.S. also feared communist expansion in Asia. Fear intensified in 1949 when China fell to a communist takeover, despite economic and military support from the Americans for the Chinese Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek. By 1950, Americans firmly embraced the "domino theory" as a principle in their foreign strategy for the Far East. This theory assumed that once the United States allowed one Asian country to fall to communism, the rest would fall, one country at a time. In June 1950 Soviet-backed North Koreans crossed the 38th parallel and invaded South Korea, directly challenging that American policy. President

¹²Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 377-8; Whalen and Whalen, Longest Debate, 217, 222-3, 226; Congressional Record, House, 1964, 88th Cong., 2nd Sess., 15870-1; Lyndon Johnson, "Radio and Television Remarks Upon Signing the Civil Rights Bill, 2 July 1964," Public Papers, 842-4.

¹³John Lewis Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 316-52; Jerald A. Combs, The History of American Foreign Policy: Vol. II, Since 1900 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 316-37.

Truman moved to obtain a United Nations resolution condemning the North Koreans and authorizing military forces to be sent to South Korea to repel the invasion.¹⁴

The United States also offered support to the French government in South Vietnam during the late 1940s. By 1952, 760 American “advisors” were commissioned to help eliminate communism in the region. In 1954 the North Vietnamese defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu. After the French government decided to withdraw its troops from the area, however, the U.S. chose to stay and provide aid to the South Vietnamese army in their efforts to suppress the Communist threat. By 1960, the United States had committed approximately 900 advisors to South Vietnam; within five years this number rose to 23,000. Following the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964, President Johnson escalated the U.S. participation to unprecedented proportions. In that year, the U.S. sent 184,300 troops to the region. Within two years, the figures had increased to 485,600. By 1968, more than half a million American servicemen were stationed in Vietnam. Relentless North Vietnamese attacks and covert infiltration by the Viet Cong, however, stymied the American forces.¹⁵

While most Americans supported the early involvement in Vietnam, after the mid-1960s, citizens became alarmed over rising casualties in an ongoing conflict. For Republicans, however, opposition to the Vietnam conflict posed problems. As staunch

¹⁴Combs, History of American Foreign Policy, 338-45; George C. Herring, America’s Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1959-1975, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 14, 22.

¹⁵Herring, America’s Longest War, 123; Combs, History of American Foreign Policy, 389-98; Summers, Vietnam War Almanac, 29, 30, 36, 40, 44, 48, 335.

anti-communists, they based their support for military intervention in the region on the desire to halt the spread of communism. Also, the perceived anti-patriotism displayed by war protesters had appalled conservatives and traditionalists. Republicans feared that if they stood openly against the war, then they could be perceived as tolerant of communism. As the United States government continued to refuse to wage an all-out effort against the North Vietnamese, many Republicans began to desire troop withdrawal. Long-time activist for the Texas GOP, Mary Anna Sewalt, spoke for many conservative Texans by stating that for years she and her husband silently “resented that war and the way it was run.” She felt relief once middle-class Americans began speaking out against U.S. involvement in the conflict. Furthermore, she declared that Democratic voters began switching to the GOP “because they couldn’t stand Johnson” and his refusal to withdraw from Vietnam. Alma Box agreed with Sewalt concerning the impact of the Vietnam conflict on Texas voters, and she observed that “the conservative Democrats realized they were in the wrong party.” American involvement grew increasingly unpopular across the nation following the North Vietnamese Tet Offensive in February 1968, which was considered a psychological loss for the United States. Bitter divisions at home cast doubt on President Johnson’s earlier decision to escalate the crisis. In 1968, in the face of domestic protest and haunted by his failure in Viet Nam, the Democratic president decided not to seek a second full term of office.¹⁶

¹⁶Ibid.; Mary Anna Sewalt, “Oral Interview with Mary Anna Sewalt,” OH 965 (University Archives, Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas), 26-7; Alma Box, “Oral Interview with Alma Box,” OH 967 (University Archives, Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas), 11.

Throughout the era of the Vietnam War, the U.S. faced a steady bombardment of Soviet threats. The first successful test of a Russian nuclear bomb in 1949 stunned Americans, who believed that such a development was still years into the future. Later, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev terrified Americans when he boasted that he had nuclear rockets capable of “wiping any country off the face of the earth.” Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, events such as the Russian launch of the Sputnik satellite, Fidel Castro’s takeover in Cuba, the construction of the Berlin Wall by the East German communists, and the face-off between Kennedy and Khrushchev in the Cuban missile crisis forced American citizens to realize that the power and dominance the United States previously held over the world was in jeopardy.¹⁷

Both the Republican and Democratic parties struggled to maintain consistency and loyalty in the face of the domestic and international turmoil throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In Texas, conservative Democrats accepted Johnson’s moves against the communist foe, but they rejected his stance for civil rights. Republicans, on the other hand, stood not only against communist encroachments but also against any efforts to desegregate American society. Betty Andujar, later elected as the first Republican woman to the state Senate, stated that she did not understand why whites were forced to “stand still while the minorities take the rights.” She further advanced the position of other conservative Texans in declaring that “equality is equality, and it is up to you to get what you can get.” Increasingly, like-minded, loyal Texas Democrats found that the state

¹⁷Combs, The History of American Foreign Policy, 356-7, 377-9; Matusow, The Unraveling of America, 12.

GOP better served their interests. Slowly, they began to shift their votes toward the Republican party.¹⁸

This transition actually had its beginnings during the Eisenhower years. The Eisenhower administration realized the debt owed to Democrats in the state for carrying Texas in the election of 1952, and as a result the new president duly rewarded them for their efforts. Across the nation, choice patronage positions went to instrumental members of the Citizens for Eisenhower group, including the leader of the Texas coalition, Oveta Culp Hobby, who was named Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare.¹⁹ Also, Eisenhower decided that alliances with influential Democratic party political office holders would potentially help him more than members of a struggling state party would. The president maintained not only a close professional relationship but also a personal friendship with his political ally and golfing partner, Texas Governor Allan Shivers.²⁰

¹⁸Betty Andujar, "Oral Interview with Betty Andujar," OH 964 (University Archives, Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas), 31-2; "History of Preston West Republican Women's Club," in "History of Bexar County/History of Preston West" folder, Texas Federation of Republican Women Historian's Collection, in the home of Annette Hopkins, San Angelo, Texas (hereafter cited as TFRW Historian's Collection, Hopkins).

¹⁹"Mrs. Hobby is Head of 'Dems for Ike' Group," The Houston Chronicle, n.d., newspaper clipping in "1952 Eisenhower-Mrs. Hobby's Statement"; telegram, Oveta Culp Hobby to Mildred McAfee Horton, March 19, 1952, and telegram, Walter Williams to Hobby, September 22, 1952, both in "Eisenhower-Citizens for Advisory Council"; Mary Lord to Hobby, November 13, 1952, in "Eisenhower-Democrats 4," Oveta Culp Hobby Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas (hereafter the former president's library will be cited as Eisenhower Library).

²⁰Dwight D. Eisenhower to Allan Shivers, March 2, 1955, Box 30, Name Series, Ann Whitman File, Dwight D. Eisenhower as President of the United States; Marvin S. Vance to Eisenhower, December 10, 1956; Shivers to Eisenhower, April 20, 1960; Eisenhower to Shivers, April 25, 1960, Box 954, President's Personal File, Central Files, Eisenhower Library.

Eisenhower also realized the dividends of working closely with the two most powerful political leaders from Texas, Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn and Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson. They became much more valuable to the president in advancing legislation through Congress than the state GOP.

Eisenhower, in fact, did not owe his first election to the Texas Republicans, but he did owe his first nomination to them. As a result, the state GOP believed it had been slighted in patronage matters. The president's attitude, however, actually worked in favor of the state Republicans. Since they could no longer rely on patronage, party leadership was forced to turn to rank-and-file members to build the party. As early as 1954, Republicans began gearing up for the 1956 election year. At the Republican State Executive Committee (RSEC) meeting on November 22, 1954, Allie Mae Currie moved that the committee go on record supporting primary elections for the Texas GOP in the next election year.²¹ The committee believed that state Republicans needed to engage in primary contests in order to encourage participation in party affairs. The GOP also hoped to capture the attention of the large number of independents in the state and avowed that it no longer wanted to rely on Democrats to win elections for Republican candidates.

²¹The election law stated that if any political party received more than 10,000 votes in a senatorial or gubernatorial election, then the party had to conduct primaries prior to the next general elections. The Texas Republican party typically did not receive enough votes to force primary contests. In the 1954 election the party did not come near the mark needed to mandate primaries in the 1956 election year; however, the SREC opted to choose candidates for the 1956 general election through the primary, rather than convention, process. See "Minutes of the Republican State Executive Committee Meeting, November 22, 1954," in "Texas 1955," Leonard Hall Papers, Eisenhower Library.

Members of the state party supported the move for primaries and began organizing for the 1956 elections.²²

The Texas Federation of Republican Women (TFRW) seized its first opportunity to show its strength in the campaigns of 1956. Formed in October 1955, the women had to mobilize quickly. At the charter meeting, the leadership urged Texas women once again to join the president and help him retain his office.²³ Immediately, Republican women began to hold workshops specifically designed to accomplish the goal of building the party from the grassroots. The initial training sessions targeted district level committeewomen, committeemen, county chairs, vice-chairs, and other important leaders of the party. These workshop participants then assumed responsibility for holding educational sessions in their own respective counties, communities, or precincts. Reelecting Eisenhower became their immediate goal, but their long-term mission remained to continue building the party from the ground up until they established a two-party system in Texas.²⁴

By the close of 1955, the TFRW, led by its first president, Aileen O’Callaghan, totaled more than 2,000 members. Taking her presidential duties seriously, O’Callaghan prepared for the upcoming election, continually stressing to the membership that “the

²²“GOP Texas Plans,” Dallas Morning News, November 24, 1954; “Porter Right in Urging G.O.P. Primary Elections in 1956,” The Houston Chronicle, November 24, 1954.

²³“Texans Urged to Join Ike’s Crusade,” San Antonio Express, October 21, 1955.

²⁴Minutes of SREC, November 22, 1954.

Republican secret weapon is women,” and that a “vote only counts after it is cast.”²⁵ To that end, she set a precedent for TFRW presidents by traveling all over the state mustering support for candidates and encouraging Texans to pay their poll tax. Within one year of the charter meeting in San Antonio, O’Callaghan had driven more than 5,000 miles traversing the state in an attempt to build support for the state party. Realizing the importance of the women’s participation, the Texas GOP began contributing money to the TFRW, thus recognizing it as an arm of the official party structure.²⁶

In a report to the president of the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW), Mrs. Carroll D. Kearns, O’Callaghan described the political situation for the Texas GOP as “depressing.” She reported that many county seats had no Republican headquarters and that local Republicans assumed a passive stance, waiting for someone to come to offer them direction. She also noted that the state party woefully lacked in leadership because several of the members of the SREC “loafed.” She further observed that although most of the members of the SREC were highly regarded, some appeared to be very unpopular in their communities, thus turning prospective party workers away. O’Callaghan attempted to shore up the weaknesses of the party as she traveled the state.²⁷ Applauding O’Callaghan’s dedication, Kearns stated her desire for the “personal touch” to be applied in every state.²⁸ The president’s determination also impressed members of

²⁵ Aileen O’Callaghan to All Members of the Texas Federation, October 9, 1956, in “Texas (1),” National Federation of Republican Women Papers, Eisenhower Library (hereafter cited as NFRW Papers).

²⁶ Aileen O’Callaghan to Mrs. Carroll D. Kearns, October 30, 1956, Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Kearns to O’Callaghan, November 9, 1956, Ibid.

individual clubs, and as a result they worked harder to persuade the “undecideds” and “discerning Democrats” to join in support of Republican candidates.²⁹

Once again, women actively campaigned for Eisenhower throughout the state in 1956, mobilizing under the banner of “Womanpower For Eisenhower: Operation Precinct.” NFRW president Kearns averred that womanpower helped elect Ike with 52 percent of the vote in 1952, and she challenged the women to “deliver 56 percent of the vote in November 1956” for the president. Basing their strategies on the successful effort waged in 1952, the women began their work in precinct membership drives. Ike asked the women to “leave no doorbell unring,” and they doggedly fulfilled his request. Working together or individually, they covered their neighborhoods, knocking on every door in an attempt to register prospective Republican voters. In addition, they packed the telephone banks and sent out mass mailings to Eisenhower supporters.³⁰

As it had in 1952, the precinct-to-precinct membership drive worked well. Across the state, individual Republican women’s clubs held either an outdoor barbecue or picnic in May 1956, and they invited their husbands, prospective members, Democrats who previously supported Ike, all GOP officials, recent high school graduates, college students, and military personnel. They geared their program to the youthful guests and

²⁹O’Callaghan to Betty Lou Atkins, December 28, 1955, Ibid.; Report to Board of National Federation submitted by O’Callaghan, March 2, 1956, in “State Reports,” NFRW Papers.

³⁰“News Release,” March 14, 1956, in “Press Release”; O’Callaghan to All Members of the Texas Federation, October 13 and 25, 1956, in “Texas (1),” “The TFRW Report to Board of National Federation, March 2, 1965,” in “State Reports,” NFRW Papers; Richard M. Scammon, ed., America Votes 2: A Handbook of Contemporary American Election Statistics, 1956-1957 (New York: MacMillan Company, 1958), 390.

stressed the achievements of the Eisenhower administration. O'Callaghan warned members not to become overconfident and neglect their duties as party workers. She urged them to make contact with all interested female voters in their community and arrange baby-sitting or transportation needs in order to ensure that every woman had the opportunity to cast her vote for the Republican ticket, whether it be absentee or on election day.³¹

The Texas women helped turn out the vote for Eisenhower, and in doing so they narrowly missed their national president's challenge: Ike claimed a victory in Texas with 55.3 percent of the vote in 1956. With a second term guaranteed, Texas Republicans hoped Eisenhower would better represent their interests. In the end, however, all they received from the 1956 campaign was an inherited quarter-of-a-million-dollar debt from the non-partisan Citizens for Eisenhower group. In need of financial resources, the Texas GOP experienced difficulty raising the necessary funds for state campaigns waged throughout the remainder of the 1950s.³²

The state Republicans ran short of funds at a very inopportune time. In 1956 United States Senator Price Daniel vacated his seat when he opted to run on the Democratic ticket for governor. A special election in 1957 to replace Daniel offered the party an opportunity to gain a Senate seat. Quickly, conservative Republican Thad Hutcheson and liberal Democrat Ralph Yarborough expressed interest. The GOP believed that when offered a choice between a conservative and a liberal, voters would

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

elect the more conservative candidate. Governor Shivers selected William Blakeley, a conservative Democrat, to fill the unexpired term of Daniel until the election. Once in office, however, Blakely did not impress the governor as a man who could fend off a strong Republican candidate. Agreeing that a conservative Republican would probably win over a liberal Democrat, Shivers delayed scheduling the election for the remainder of his tenure in office. Most Democrats simply did not think that they had any good contenders who were willing to sacrifice an office they already held to run for the open Senate seat.³³

After being elected governor, Price Daniel set a special election for April 2, 1957, for the remaining twenty months of his unexpired Senate term. By that time, however, the Democrats had recruited conservative Martin Dies to represent them in the election. Since he would have to split the conservative vote with Dies, Hutcheson's hopes were dashed.³⁴

The Texas GOP considered Hutcheson to be the rising star of the state party. Much like Bruce Alger, U.S. Congressman from Dallas, he was hard working, charming, and a personally appealing candidate. In addition, he elicited a strong effort from his volunteer corps, chiefly comprised of upper-middle-class housewives. Financial problems, though, plagued him because the party could only provide about one-fifth of the funds necessary to wage a campaign of that magnitude. The women attempted to make up for the paucity of funds. They rang doorbells, stuffed envelopes, arranged

³³Olien, Token to Triumph, 147-149.

³⁴Ibid.

public appearances, personally telephoned voters, and energetically staged rallies. They also moved outside of their comfort zone in efforts to garner support. The women spoke to members of labor unions as they went to work. One morning at 5:00 the women organized at the local bus garages and handed out coffee, doughnuts, and Hutcheson political paraphernalia.³⁵

Despite their tireless efforts, Hutcheson lost the election. Yarborough managed to unite the liberal element, thus securing the victory. As feared, Hutcheson split the conservative vote with Dies. The Republican could take some consolation in the fact that he had received the largest statewide vote for any GOP contender not running in a presidential election year. In a letter to the new NFRW President, Catherine Gibson, O'Callaghan stressed that the Texas GOP had "cried wolf" so often that voters did not believe that the Republicans would run a viable candidate. She also professed that if Hutcheson could have contested Yarborough alone, he most likely would have captured the seat. Although their candidate lost, the Republican women experienced a small gain. In accounting for the vote total cast for Hutcheson, the Texas press credited the efforts of "Republican formidable womanpower."³⁶

As the members of TFRW moved toward 1960, many challenges loomed before them. Due to the unpopular decisions Eisenhower made regarding petroleum interests and patronage, the women experienced difficulty in increasing their membership rolls

³⁵Ibid.; O'Callaghan to Caroline and Thad Hutcheson, April 8, 1957; O'Callaghan to Catherine Gibson, NFRW President, April 8, 1957, in "Texas," NFRW Papers; Scammon, ed., America Votes 2, 390.

³⁶Ibid.

during the late 1950s. The largest obstacle they faced involved Ike's concessions involving civil rights. The president's 1957 civil rights initiative disturbed them, and his commitment to school desegregation further unsettled them. The United States Supreme Court had ruled racially segregated education unconstitutional in Brown v. Topeka Board of Education in 1954, and southern whites angrily opposed this decision. In 1957 Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus refused to allow nine African-American students to attend an all-white high school in Little Rock. As a result, Eisenhower followed a court order and deployed federal troops to Arkansas to enforce desegregation. TFRW president, Maxine Elam, wrote to Meade Alcorn, Republican party national chair, in February 1968, and she criticized Ike's policies concerning petroleum issues and objected strongly to the president's actions in "the Little Rock situation." According to Elam, Ike's desegregation attempts caused TFRW membership to drop by two-thirds in some areas of the state.³⁷

As the presidential election year approached in 1960, the Texas GOP faced a herculean task in rallying the volunteer corps behind Republican nominee Richard M. Nixon. Several factors initially worked against Nixon. First, he served as vice-president with Eisenhower. When the president supported strong, new civil rights legislation in 1960, Nixon publicly agreed with him. Texas conservatives openly disagreed with his agenda and seethed with anger. Most state Republicans, therefore, initially had a difficult time aligning with Nixon. They believed the candidate disregarded the conservative voters because of his belief that they had no where to turn except the GOP. Furthermore,

³⁷Olien, Token to Triumph, 168.

they accused him of “turning left” and “wooing the liberals.” Nixon’s stand on civil rights made it difficult for him to penetrate Texas or the Solid South.³⁸

Emerging from the national political nominating conventions, neither Nixon nor Kennedy appeared to have an advantage at the polls. Nixon and his running mate Henry Cabot Lodge immediately moved to court the southern Democrats, reassuring them that voting for the Republican ticket would not mean deserting their party because the Democratic party had long since abandoned them.³⁹ He borrowed a strategy from Eisenhower’s 1952 campaign and established non-partisan Nixon-Lodge Clubs across the nation as his campaign bases. He knew that more Democrats and Independents voted in the country than Republicans, so he made a strong bipartisan appeal.⁴⁰ In Texas, Nixon garnered some support when former Democratic Governor Allan Shivers agreed to campaign on his behalf. Although native son Johnson attracted votes, a large number of Texans believed that Kennedy was too liberal and more representative of the northeastern states than the South. Within weeks of the election, it remained uncertain which candidate would carry Texas. One week before election day, Shivers campaigned throughout the southern states rather than Texas, leading the Dallas Morning News to

³⁸Stephen E. Ambrose, Nixon: The Education of a Politician, 1913-1962 (Simon and Schuster, 1987), 536.

³⁹Nixon chose former Senator and United Nations Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., as his running mate in the 1960 presidential election.

⁴⁰Ambrose, Nixon, 560-561.

report that Shivers's absence from the state hinted that the Nixon staff believed Texas had already been secured. Such thinking, however, was premature.⁴¹

Just prior to the November 8 election, events in the state took a strange turn. On November 3, Johnson's campaign staff ran a full-page advertisement in the Dallas Times Herald recording the names of 3,500 citizens of Dallas County who purportedly supported the Kennedy-Johnson ticket. Within an hour of publication, hundreds began calling the newspaper office to protest the use of their names. Investigations quickly revealed that at least a dozen of the "supporters" were dead. On November 4, the Dallas Morning News printed comments from more than one hundred enraged citizens ranging from "I'm working my fool head off for Nixon" to "I wouldn't vote for Johnson for dogcatcher." Many in Dallas County appeared unforgiving of Johnson's advertisement.⁴²

Some citizens, however, found another forum from which to vent their frustration. On Friday, November 4, Bruce Alger had arranged for approximately three hundred women volunteers to assemble in downtown Dallas in the vicinity of the Hotel Adolphus for a "tag day," with a goal to pin a Nixon button, or "tag," on every man going to work. While planned several months in advance, the event had not been publicized because supporters wanted to surprise the public. The women converged on the business district

⁴¹"Shivers Emerging as a Big Gun in the South," Dallas Morning News, November 3, 1960.

⁴²"Many Protest Their Name Being Listed in Johnson Ad" and "Many Loudly Protest Being Named in Ad," Dallas Morning News, November 4, 1960.

that morning, and events flowed smoothly. The lunch hour, however, brought an unforgettable and unforgivable event.⁴³

Johnson and his supporters had planned a luncheon at the Hotel Adolphus on the same day that the Republican women planned their “tag day.” At noon, Congressman Alger and the GOP women, still angry about the November 3 advertisement, staged an “impromptu” demonstration on the sidewalks, in the street, and in the Adolphus lobby. Approximately four hundred Nixon supporters gathered, lifting their pro-Nixon and anti-Johnson signs. As Johnson and his wife, Lady Bird, who were staying in a hotel across the street, prepared to make their way over to the Adolphus Grand Ballroom, hotel security realized the potential problems and offered to help him avoid the situation by using a side door in his hotel instead. Johnson refused. He planned to capitalize on this event. He further requested that the police guards stand aside while he escorted his wife across the street. The Republicans heavily outnumbered the few Johnson supporters in the crowd. LBJ and his wife struggled for thirty minutes to push their way through the sea of hostile demonstrators. As they crossed into the Adolphus, several scuffles broke out among the women. The Dallas Morning News reported that the clash between the Nixon and Kennedy forces resulted in “head bangings with partisan signs and vicious elbow jabs to stomachs and ribs.”⁴⁴

⁴³“Dallas Luncheon, Rally Planned to LBJ Visit,” Dallas Morning News, November 3, 1960; “LBJ Calls Nixon Fans At His Rally ‘Discourteous’: Senator Jeered at Dallas Hotel,” James Lehrer and Sue Connally, “LBJ, Wife Remained Calm,” Mary Brinkerhoff, “Lady G.O.P. Taggers Collide With LBJ Welcome,” and “Bruce Alger Was There,” Dallas Morning News, November 5, 1960.

⁴⁴Ibid.

Alger claimed that Johnson “trumped up” the situation and, as a result, received significant political advantage from the incident.⁴⁵ LBJ commented in a speech later that evening that he saw the event as “sad,” but added that “maybe it’s for the good, it is going to get us votes.” Undeniably, Alger and the GOP women crossed the boundaries of respectable behavior. Major newspapers published a picture of the congressman flanked by crowds of women and holding a sign reading, “LBJ Sold Out To Yankee Socialists,” which referred to Johnson’s forged alliance with the liberal, pro-labor, northeastern Kennedy clan. Johnson, in turn, used this incident as a focal point in every speech leading up to election day.⁴⁶

After the election, Nixon claimed Dallas, but Kennedy and Johnson carried Texas. The vote count across the state, however, was precariously close. Kennedy received 50.5 percent of the total vote, and Nixon nabbed 48.5 percent.⁴⁷ In fact, among the major cities in the country, Dallas voters gave Nixon the largest vote-margin over JFK. Historian Stephen Ambrose claimed that a vote shift in the nation of one-tenth of 1 percent would have placed Nixon in the White House instead of Kennedy.⁴⁸ According to Texas historian Roger Olien, Johnson’s skillful use of this incident probably gained support for the Democratic ticket in what appeared to be a close presidential contest,

⁴⁵Bruce Alger, “Oral Interview with Bruce Alger, May 26, 1981” (Dallas Public Library: Texas-Dallas Historical Collection, Dallas, Texas), 39-41.

⁴⁶“LBJ Calls Nixon Fans At His Rally ‘Discourteous,’” Dallas Morning News, November 5, 1960.

⁴⁷“Nixon, Tower lead in Dallas County,” Dallas Morning News, November 9, 1960; Richard Scammon, ed., America Votes 4: A Handbook of Contemporary American Election Statistics, 1960 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962), 395.

“which was finally decided by a handful of votes in Illinois and Texas.” Clearly, the GOP women acted in a manner that defeated their own purposes. Following this event, the women realized that their actions could potentially affect the outcome of a campaign, both positively and negatively. Forced to evaluate their behavior, the women had to find a way to emerge from their “darkest hour.”⁴⁹

Republican women, as well as the state party organization, had the chance to vindicate themselves in a special election in 1961 featuring a newcomer to party affairs, John G. Tower of Wichita Falls. Tower ran in the 1960 Senate race against incumbent Lyndon Johnson, who was running simultaneously for vice-president. He found support when former Democratic Governor Allan Shivers, who also supported Eisenhower in his campaigns, openly aligned with the Democrats for Nixon organization. Tower hoped to ride Nixon’s coattails into office. Tower waged a strong campaign against the popular Democrat, but he fell short in November. The Republican contender garnered 926,653 votes for 41.1 percent of the total ballots cast. Even in his loss he made great strides for the Texas GOP. In the previous senatorial race in 1954, the Republican candidate, Carlos Watson, had gained only 15 percent of the vote count against Johnson. Because of

⁴⁸Carolyn Barta, Bill Clements: Texian to his Toenails (Austin: Eakin Press, 1996), 115; Ambrose, Nixon, 607-608.

⁴⁹Olien, Token to Triumph, 172-173. In addition to the incident involving the women, county judges in Texas were suspected of throwing away at least 100,000 ballots because supposedly voters marked them incorrectly. The Republicans claimed that most of the discarded ballots had been cast in the areas of strong GOP support. Richard Nixon entertained the idea of a recount, but the Republicans backed off once they realized that they lacked the proof to determine whether or not the GOP candidate had a clear disadvantage. See Matusow, The Unraveling of America, 26-7.

Tower's strong showing in the general election, the state party seemed confident of his chances for the Senate seat once Johnson moved into his position as vice-president.⁵⁰

Governor Daniel named William Blakley to fill the vacant seat until a special election could be held in May 1961. Blakley, a conservative, had filled this Senate seat earlier when Daniel vacated it for the governorship. In the 1957 special election that followed Daniel's resignation, Blakley ran against Republican Thad Hutcheson and liberal Democrat Ralph Yarborough in the challenge for the open seat. Yarborough won that election because Blakley and Hutcheson split the conservative vote. In 1961, however, the two strongest candidates for the spot were Blakley and Tower. Although both professed to be staunch conservatives, Tower attempted to align Blakley with President Kennedy and the liberal element of the party. Meanwhile, Texas liberals grew so disgusted with both candidates by election day that they threatened to abstain from voting.⁵¹

Tower encountered the same problems Hutcheson experienced. Funds ran low, and the constant shortages forced the Republicans to cut corners in the areas of advertising, travel, and campaign paraphernalia. Once again, the party summoned the corps of women. Following what historian Roger Olien called the "Alger model," (few

⁵⁰Michael J. Dubin, United States Congressional Elections, 1788-1997: The Official Results of the 1st Through 105th Congress (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers), 604, 631; Olien, Token to Triumph, 174; John R. Knaggs, Two-Party Texas: The John Tower Era, 1961-1984 (Austin: Eakin Press, 1986), 4; John G. Tower, Consequences: A Personal and Political Memoir (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), 17.

⁵¹Olien, Token to Triumph, 174-5; Knaggs, Two-Party Texas, 5, 12; Tower, Consequences, 20-1.

funds but large platoons of housewife volunteers), Tower set a new standard for Republican volunteering. Over the course of his political career, Tower actually did more to showcase the potential and talent of the GOP women and accelerate the implementation of the two-party system in Texas than any other candidate in state party history.⁵²

John Knaggs, biographer of John Tower, claimed that one of the areas of strength for Tower and the state GOP rested in the “well-disciplined cadre of women.” While women maintained their day-to-day campaign chores in various headquarters across the state, Tower traveled in a single-engine airplane across the state to establish contact with as many voters as possible. Tower claimed that the women’s efforts were crucial to his 1961 race. Day and night they stuffed envelopes, answered telephones, distributed pamphlets, surveyed voters, and scheduled speaking events. Later, in his 1966 reelection campaign, the senator constructed a “Womanpower for Tower” strategy that quickly became the model for future party hopefuls.⁵³

Tower worked hard to convince voters that he was the “conservatives choice.” In the 1961 race, he capitalized on two situations. First, the politicians in the state speculated that if Texas planned to implement a two-party system, then voters in the state would probably divide between liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans. The liberal element in the state realized that if they wanted to wrest power of the Democratic party away from the traditional conservative Democrats, then a Tower victory would be to their

⁵²Olien, Token to Triumph, 142; Knaggs, Two-Party Texas, 14.

⁵³Knaggs, Two-Party Texas, 7; Tower, Consequences, 22-3.

advantage; therefore, supposedly a significant number of liberals chose to simply “go fishing” on election day. Tower’s second opportunity came about six weeks before the election when the futile Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba occurred. Tower used the incident to portray Kennedy as being weak on communism, and he further painted Blakley as a Kennedy Democrat. Although Blakley was as conservative as Tower, the Democrat could not afford to affront the president and risk alienating the voters of his party.⁵⁴

Tower’s “Womenpower for Tower” strategy proved successful. Through their round-the-clock effort, his volunteer corps of women turned out the vote for the senator-elect. When Texans cast their ballots on May 27, the Republican won 50.5 percent of the 886,091 total votes. Tower’s winning vote margin only amounted to 10,343, but that 1 percent was enough for victory. Many newspapers defined Tower’s win as a “fluke,” while others declared that the triumph helped loosen the stranglehold the conservatives held on the party for almost a century. With this win, the GOP demonstrated the ability and talent of its strong grassroots and proved that the party appeared to be on the verge of posing serious threats on future election days.⁵⁵

During the off-year elections in 1962, several races indicated that maybe Tower’s election was not a fluke and that the state GOP was indeed making inroads into the political structure in Texas. Republican Jack Cox, a onetime Democratic member of the state legislature and successful oil well drilling contractor, ran surprisingly well against

⁵⁴Knaggs, Two-Party Texas, 12, 15.

⁵⁵Tower, Consequences, 25; Texas Votes: Selected General and Special Election Statistics: 1944-1963 (Austin: Institute of Public Affairs, University of Texas, 1964), 26.

Democrat John Connally in the governor's race. After struggling through a grueling primary and runoff election, Connally spent much of his time prior to the general election trying to hold the splintered Democratic party together. Cox campaigned heavily in the population centers of the state, conducted a swing through East Texas with a country and western band in tow, and garnered support from his petroleum contacts in the West Texas region. The popular challenger, Cox, also captured the attention of the conservative Democrat press. The Republican ran a spirited and aggressive race, but he could not secure a victory. With 45.5 percent of the vote, Cox did, however, carry major cities across the state, including Dallas, Houston, Midland, Amarillo, Lubbock, Odessa, San Angelo, Abilene, Longview, and Tyler. Although liberals criticized Connally for being "too conservative," he captured the traditionally strong Democratic vote in the rural counties, South Texas, and the industrial regions located along the Gulf Coast; however, the Democrat, who had won the primary runoff with 51 percent, only managed to garner 53.9 percent of the votes cast in the general election. Despite his loss, Cox offered the state GOP hope for the future, and he showed the advantages of campaigning in every region of the state.⁵⁶

In that same election year, several Republican candidates emerged triumphant. Bruce Alger won reelection in the Fifth Congressional District in Dallas, while Ed Foreman, from the Sixteenth Congressional District in West Texas, victoriously challenged the Democratic incumbent, J. T. ("Slick") Rutherford. Foreman capitalized on the supposition that Rutherford participated in scandalous business dealings with the

⁵⁶Barta, Bill Clements, 7; Texas Votes, 24; Olien, Token to Triumph, 179-84.

notorious Billy Sol Estes, also from West Texas. In Foreman's aggressive, "clean government campaign," Odessa housewife Nadine Francis helped orchestrate a massive door-to-door campaign throughout the city on the Republican's behalf. The citizens of Odessa had never experienced campaigning at this level, and on election day they responded by giving Foreman 53.8 percent of the vote. In addition, for the first time voters in Dallas and West Texas chose to send seven Republicans to the Texas State Legislature. Perhaps more notably, Republican Barbara Culver emerged the winner in her race for county judge in Midland. With her victory, she became the only Republican and the only woman in the state to hold that office. Because of the 1962 campaign successes, the state GOP looked forward to the 1964 elections with great anticipation.⁵⁷

The tragic turn of events on November 22, 1963, however, dashed the Republicans hopes. As the nation mourned the assassination of President Kennedy, a dark cloud formed over Dallas, the traditional stronghold of the state GOP. Only three years earlier, a crowd of female protesters had "manhandled" Vice-President Johnson and his wife during a campaign stopover in the city. Then, only months before Kennedy's death, Adlai Stevenson, United Nations Ambassador and Democrat, visited Dallas on United Nations Day to deliver a speech. During his appearance, a woman carrying a picket sign struck him on the head. The emotional fallout that resulted from the assassination wiped out the Republican gains, except for Tower's seat and one seat in the Texas House. The loss became apparent in the 1964 elections. Since Tower did not face

⁵⁷Dubin, United States Congressional Elections, 1788-1997, 637; Olien, Token to Triumph, 186.

reelection until 1966, he managed to hold on to his office. In an effort to deflect responsibility for the assassination and to prove that they were not anti-Kennedy or anti-Democrat, Texans overwhelmingly voted Democratic. The work of twelve years seemed to disappear in the aftermath of national tragedy.⁵⁸

Prior to the assassination, the state GOP had targeted two potential candidates for the 1964 elections. Republican George Bush of Houston planned to challenge the incumbent Ralph Yarborough in the Senate race, and Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater enticed Texas conservatives in his pursuit of the presidency. Early in 1963, Bush committed to challenging for the Senate seat. While serving as the Harris County GOP chair, Bush wrote to John Tower soliciting advice on “a few fundamentals of political life.” He asked the senator to teach him and then “turn me loose and keep your fingers crossed.” William P. (“Bill”) Clements, one of Bush’s oil drilling contracting partners, first urged the Houstonian to seek political office. Clements volunteered to handle the fundraising and finances for Bush.⁵⁹

The Republican candidate, however, had to face Jack Cox in the GOP primary. Cox, coming off a good race against Connally for governor, forced Bush to expend a great deal of energy and money in order to gain the opportunity to run in November

⁵⁸O. Douglas Weeks, Texas In 1964: A One-Party State Again? (Austin: Institute of Public Affairs, University of Texas, 1965), 3; Alger Interview, 37-8; Barta, Bill Clements, 115-6; Richard M. Scammon, ed. America Votes 6: A Handbook of Contemporary American Election Statistics, 1964 (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1966), 397.

⁵⁹George Bush to John Tower, August 23, 1963, Box 637-11, John G. Tower Papers, Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas (hereafter cited as Tower Papers); Scammon, America Votes 6, 397; Barta, Bill Clements, 9.

against Yarborough. When the general election approached, Bush found himself facing not just the incumbent, but also the Kennedy backlash and a strong Democratic party led by the Texas President, Lyndon Johnson. The Republican party also became a handicap because it had chosen the ultra-conservative Goldwater as its nominee for president. Bush posed a strong challenge to Yarborough but lost in his first attempt at public office. Capturing 43.6 percent of the votes and running 175,771 votes ahead of the presidential candidate, Bush almost overcame what appeared to be insurmountable odds. As a result, he quickly rose as an appealing and promising candidate and soon became a “favorite” of the volunteer corps of women led by the TFRW.⁶⁰

Texas conservatives seemed enamored with Goldwater from early 1963. Peter O'Donnell, a Dallasite and chair of the Texas State Republican Executive Committee, jumped on the senator's bandwagon and became the head of the national “Draft Goldwater” committee. Several aspects about Goldwater intrigued the Texans. Specifically, conservative Texans perceived Goldwater as being “right on race.” The heart of the movement also included people who despised communism, adultery, waste, and big government.⁶¹

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Theodore White, The Making of the President, 1964 (New York: Ahenum Publishers, 1965), 94, 97, 103, 400; Dorene Hughes, “Urbanization and Republican Growth in the South, 1950-1968” (M.A. thesis, North Texas State University, 1975), 7; Lee Wood, TFRW Membership Vice-President, to Texas Federation of Republican Women, Biennial Convention, 1965, in miscellaneous folder, TFRW Historian's Collection, Hopkins; “Press Release: Texans Draft Goldwater Committee Chair Announced,” Box 442-4; Mrs. Terry Tapp to John Tower, May 7, 1963, Box 442-15, and Peter O'Donnell, Jr. to Denison Kitchel, April 21, 1964, Box 443-11, Tower Papers; America Votes 6, 397.

Members of the Republican women's clubs throughout the state overwhelmingly supported Goldwater. For the women in the West Texas region, Goldwater's name seemed to be "the magic word" in political circles. Barbara Man of Wichita Falls served as chair for the Goldwater Committee in Texas. As immediate past-president of the TFRW, Man more than tripled the number of clubs during her tenure in office. With almost 100 active Republican women's clubs in the state, the senator drew from a large corps of volunteers. Despite appeals from state Republican activists, Goldwater neglected to visit Texas prior to the primary, disappointing his supporters. Nevertheless, Texas Republicans still instructed fifty-six of their delegates to vote for Goldwater at the Republican National Convention. Johnson's popularity and solid support base, however, proved to be more than the Republican could handle. LBJ won with a convincing 61 percent of the vote nationally and 63 percent of the vote in Texas.⁶²

Following the election, the Republican National Party chair derided the Republican National Convention delegates who "foisted" Goldwater "on the backs of Republican voters." He also declared that this defeat, which "bordered on catastrophic," showed that the American voter did not want the ultra-conservatism of a candidate like Goldwater. After the 1964 debacle, the morale of Republicans dropped to a dangerously low level both on the state and national level.⁶³

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Walter S. Mack, National Chair to Delegates of the 1964 Republican Convention, Box 637-12, Tower Papers.

Despite the emotional toll the 1964 election took on the state Republican party, the women in the GOP refused to give up. In 1965, TFRW president Irene Cox urged the individual clubs to build their membership, because expanding the grassroots continued to be the most important function in each club during off-election years. By the end of her tenure in October 1965, the membership of the TFRW grew to almost 5,800 members in 128 clubs. Cox also emphasized the importance of fundraising between election years. The most popular way each club raised money was through “Pink Elephant Projects”; and the most common project and best moneymaker among the clubs was a Pink Elephant Dance. They also raised funds through “tasting teas,” rummage sales, bake sales, and bridge benefits. Additionally, women sold specially designed Texas GOP jewelry. In 1965 the women raised more than \$30,000 through the Pink Elephant projects and jewelry sales. Each club sent half of its funds raised to the Republican Party of Texas, a quarter to the state federation, and the remainder stayed in the individual club. While not mandatory, the projects were strongly encouraged. Although the GOP took a hard hit in 1964, the women focused on building a stronger base in order to achieve victories in upcoming elections. Since Tower gave the women credit for putting him in office, the members of the TFRW committed themselves to his reelection in 1966.⁶⁴

⁶⁴Wood to TFRW, Biennial Convention, 1965, in miscellaneous folder; President’s Report to the Fifth Biennial Convention, TFRW, October 29 and 30, 1965, in “1964” folder; Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, TFRW, October 29, 1965, San Antonio, Texas, in “1964” folder; Minutes of State Biennial Convention of the TFRW Held in Gunter Hotel, San Antonio, Texas, on Friday and Saturday, October 29 and 30, 1965, in “1964” folder; and Mrs. L.R. Miller, Finance Chair to TFRW, Biennial Convention, 1965, in miscellaneous folder, in TFRW Historian’s Collection, Hopkins.

The dedication of the women paid off in the 1966 elections. In that year, the TFRW donated half the project funds raised to Tower's reelection campaign. Once again, the women turned out *en masse* for Tower. Mrs. R.E. Wendland of Temple was named state chair of the Woman Power For Tower campaign. A very active club woman in various sorts of organizations, Wendland was married to a Temple grain and feed manufacturer, and the American Mothers Committee named her as Texas Mother of the Year. The Tower people also named Beryl Milburn as the director of the Woman Power For Tower movement. Long involved in the Texas federation, Milburn had previously been awarded the Outstanding Leadership Award for the TFRW. As the wife of an Austin businessman, Milburn remained active in a variety of clubs while pursuing political goals for Tower. Lou Tower, the candidate's wife, joined Wendland and Milburn in spreading the Woman Power campaign across the state.⁶⁵

The women worked diligently to muster support for Tower, but in an election year with no other statewide contest and only a handful at the local level, very little interest in either the Republican or Democratic primary surfaced. Only about 50,000 Republicans voted in the spring primary. Tower emerged victorious from the primary ready to face his Democratic challenger, Attorney General Waggoner Carr. The race appeared close from the beginning, so Tower's volunteers spent countless hours canvassing and campaigning door-to-door. Tower possessed the advantage of being the incumbent and

⁶⁵"Mrs. Wendland, Mrs. Milburn To Direct Women's Efforts," The Texas Republican 6 (September 1966), 4; "Mrs. John Tower, Feminine Side of Politics," Austin American Statesman, August 14, 1966.

having a solid conservative voting record in Washington. Carr summoned and received the support of President Johnson and Governor Connally. As a conservative Democrat, his election seemed assured because he had the opportunity to retake the conservative vote from Tower. As voter interest in the state increased, the senator's chances faded. Tower, however, gained an advantage when he began tying Carr to the liberal element of the Democratic party in campaign speeches and advertisements. Realizing the unpopularity of liberal politics in conservative Texas, Carr, in return, chose to disassociate himself from the labor unions, white-collar liberals, and some minorities. Once again, the liberal wing of the Democratic party, including Senator Ralph Yarborough, expressed the belief that they preferred a conservative Republican to a conservative Democrat. As they had in the Blakely-Tower special election in 1961, the liberals entertained the idea of “going fishing.” In November 1966, with a lower than expected voter turnout, Tower surprisingly upended Carr and captured 56.7 percent of the vote. Increasingly voters were shifting their conservative support to the GOP, away from the Johnson-led, increasingly liberal Democratic party. In Texas, once Republican candidates began linking their opposition to the liberals, party lines began to be redrawn and redefined.⁶⁶

While the Tower election was the most significant in the state, Republicans made several other gains on the local level. In the Panhandle, Bob Price won a congressional seat, and in Houston, George Bush defeated the Democratic candidate for the newly created seat in the United States Third Congressional District. Houston also sent

⁶⁶Olien, Token to Triumph, 206-11.

Republican Henry Grover to the state Senate; in doing so he became the first Republican to sit in that chamber since the 1920s. The state party also regained several of the seats in the Texas legislature that they had lost in the 1964 Democratic landslide.⁶⁷

Through all of these campaigns, the Republican women worked constantly for their party because they sincerely believed that their political ideology aligned more closely with Texas conservatives than the Democrats. Texans had long held to the ideas surrounding individualism and hard work, and as Betty Andujar pointed out, the Democrats had created a system whereby people grew too dependent upon the government for assistance. She declared that the state Republicans, not the Democrats, espoused more “independent and self-reliant activities.” Barbara Campbell, TFRW President (1983-1987), observed that she too believed “that a lot of people have forgotten the fact that you’re really not owed something by the government.” Jane Guzman, Republican member of the Board of Examiners for Professional Counselors (1989-1995), averred that, “deep-down,” all conservatives think that the average person could take better care of himself and his money than the government could. President Johnson catered to the minorities far too often for the conservatives’ tastes. They simply did not like to see any sector of the population grow dependent on the government, nor did they like witnessing political leaders foster this type of reliance. The state GOP slowly became the choice for many conservatives. Andujar proclaimed that most Democrats

⁶⁷Ibid., 212; Richard M. Scammon, ed., America Votes 8: A Handbook of Contemporary American Election Statistics, 1968 (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1970), 376.

who considered defecting to the GOP at this time simply stated, “I didn’t leave the Democratic Party; it left me.” Alma Box intimated that Texas conservatives grew weary of the Democratic-led Johnson administration, because they simply had grown weary of big government.⁶⁸

As the party expanded, so did the responsibilities of the women. Some candidates favored Tower’s tactics and organized groups of women focused on their individual campaign, while other simply tapped into the local Republican women’s club. In some areas the women expanded their duties beyond stuffing envelopes, making telephone calls, and passing out literature, and they began making television endorsements, conducting research on issues, participating on task forces, and holding training workshops. More than 5,000 strong, they were poised for their greatest challenge—the 1968 presidential election.⁶⁹

In 1968 state Republicans no longer appeared to be discouraged by the 1964 losses. The GOP listed candidates in the races for governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, state treasurer, comptroller of public accounts, agricultural commissioner, land commissioner, railroad commissioner, and for various judgeships. No campaign,

⁶⁸Andujar, OH 964, 6-7; Box, OH 967, 12-13; Barbara Campbell, “Oral Interview with Barbara Campbell,” OH 969 (University Archives, Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas), 41; Jane Guzman, “Oral Interview with Jane Guzman,” OH 905 (University Archives, Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas), 23.

⁶⁹Minutes of the State Biennial Convention, in “1964” folder; President’s Report to the Sixth Biennial Convention, October 27-28, 1967, in “Texas Federation 1967/National 1967” folder, TFRW Historian’s Collection, Hopkins; “Women Work on Task Forces,” 3, and “GOP Task Forces Study State Problem,” 2, Partyline 4 (September 1967).

however, emerged as more important for the Republicans than the presidential race between Republican Richard Nixon and Democrat Hubert Humphrey. Nixon came tantalizingly close to defeating Kennedy in the 1960 presidential election, and Texas Republicans vowed not to let the opportunity pass again.⁷⁰

During the 1968 campaign season, Nixon possessed the advantage of a unified party and sufficient financial support, whereas his opponent in the general election, Vice-President Hubert Humphrey, carried a splintered and disgruntled party behind him. The Vietnam War dragged on, and opposition to the Democratic administration heightened.⁷¹ The Democratic convention met on in Chicago August 26, 1968, amidst great turmoil. While Humphrey faced a political challenge from Eugene McCarthy, who had taken a strong stand against continual involvement in Vietnam, he also faced a determined challenge by anti-war demonstrators. Violence increased to the point that the city officials encircled the convention hall with barbed wire, and solicited assistance from some 30,000 policemen, firemen, national guardsmen, regular Army troops, FBI agents, and secret service agents in order to protect the conventioners. As the Democrats nominated Humphrey inside, the law enforcement forces clashed violently with protesters outside. At the conclusion, the convention proved to be a disaster, the party had severely divided, and the Humphrey campaign finances were dissipating. To make matters worse, Alabama Governor George Wallace announced his candidacy in a third party, the

⁷⁰“For Your Information,” Partyline 5 (February-March, 1968), 2.

⁷¹Albert Eisele, Almost to the Presidency: A Biography of Two American Politicians (Blue Earth, MN: The Piper Company, 1972), 345, 347-8, 357-8, 364-5, 381, 391, 393.

American Independent Party, and in doing so led a splinter group of blue-collar workers and conservative Democrats in the South. The convention activities apparently frustrated the Texas Democrats, because when election day finally arrived, their nominee, Humphrey, received half a million votes less than the Republican and Independent candidates combined. If Wallace had not campaigned for the presidency, Nixon may have easily carried the state.⁷²

In Texas the GOP capitalized on the split Democratic party and campaigned diligently, persuading traditional Democrats to switch over to the GOP and Nixon. In response to the state Republican party's desire to win over discontented Democrats, the women came out in unprecedented numbers for Nixon and participated in a nationwide program called Women For Nixon. Texan Nola Smith served as the state's director of women's activities, and she effectively mobilized the club women in the Lone Star State. Although implemented through the Republican women's clubs, leaders of the program sought women who could attract both the Republican and Democratic vote. One representative from each club and one representative from each county served as coordinators. These coordinators also became the "Get Out The Vote" chairs in each county. Women For Nixon leaders assigned the tasks of recruitment and fundraising to the TFRW.⁷³

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Nola Smith to Jean Hawkins, September 9, 1968, Box 512-8; Smith to County Republican Party Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen in Counties Without Nixon Chairmen, September 11, 1968, Box 512-8; Beryl Milburn and Thelma Olcott to Republican Women's Club Presidents, September 11, 1968, Box 512-8, Tower Papers.

The Women For Nixon and the TFRW combined to carry out two major campaign programs: “Dollars for Dick” and “Dial A Vote For Dick.” They intended to raise money to buy television and radio time through small donations. In “Dollars For Dick,” women mainly passed out envelopes to other women and solicited donations of \$5.00 to be mailed to the state Women For Nixon headquarters. In addition, the Women For Nixon committee organized “Dial A Vote For Dick” to turn out the Republican vote and hopefully attract support from Democrats willing to switch to Nixon. The TFRW hoped that each member would recruit five additional volunteers through this massive telephone campaign.⁷⁴

Besides these two programs, the women also held “Phantom Coffee Hours.” Women sent out invitations for a political fund-raiser but stipulated that no one had to attend. To be eligible not to attend, women just signed the invitation and returned \$1.00 or more back to the “phantom hostess.” To boost Republican campaigns across the country, the national federation organized the “GOP Women’s Nixon-Agnew Voteswagon Tour.” They rolled into towns across the nation where Republican dignitaries came out to meet them. As the Voteswagon tour crossed Texas, several of the

⁷⁴Smith to All Nixon for President Chairmen in the Counties, n.d., Box 740-8; Smith to County Chairmen, Women For Nixon, September 13, 1968, Box 513-8; Milburn to TFRW Officials and Republican Women’s Club Nixon Volunteer Coordinators, September 20, 1968, Box 512-9; Smith to Women For Nixon Chairmen, September 24, 1968, Box 512-8, Tower Papers.

prominent Republican women in the state joined them to encourage other women to vote for the Republican ticket.⁷⁵

Despite Nixon's ability to gain the majority of the national vote, he failed to win in Texas. In a close race, Nixon earned 1,227,844 votes for 39.9 percent of the total votes in the state, while Humphrey only managed to win 41.1 percent of all ballots cast. The third party candidate, George Wallace, garnered the remaining 19 percent. Although Nixon lost Texas, Republicans did make gains. George Bush of Houston, Bob Price of West Texas, and James Collins of Dallas all won in their campaigns for the United States Congress. Republicans also selected two state senators and eight representatives to serve in Austin. The Texas GOP had bounced back from the debacle of 1964.⁷⁶

In the 1968 election, Nixon was not the only candidate who gained the support and interest of women. Jim Collins, the newly-elected congressman from the Dallas area, taught many of women the keys to organizing a campaign. He included them in all aspects of campaign management. According to Alma Box, Collins did more to inspire the volunteers than any other candidate. Barbara Campbell echoed her opinion stating, "more people from this general area were indoctrinated or cut their teeth on politics in some capacity with Jim Collins." He held campaign seminars for women at his ranch outside of Dallas, teaching them how to build grassroots support, emphasizing the need to walk the precincts in order to get acquainted with the voters. Each year on the Fourth of

⁷⁵News Release, "GOP Women's 'Voteswagon' Rolls Into Texas," September 30, 1968, Box 740-1; "Phantom Coffee Hour," Box 739-1, Tower Papers.

⁷⁶America Votes 8, 364, 376.

July, Collins instructed his volunteer to walk the streets in their neighborhoods and write down the address of every home that was flying the American flag. In turn, Collins would send a personal letter to each household and thank them for their show of patriotism. He always rewarded his volunteers for their efforts by organizing a dinner at the end of a walk or a party at the closing of a campaign. Collins taught women the importance of building grassroots, and, as Box observed, “he helped them see their significance in his campaigns.”⁷⁷

From 1956 to 1968, the Republicans in Texas experienced political highs and lows, and in the end they had learned how to capitalize on both. Although fueled by the Democrats willingness to cross party lines and vote for Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956, the GOP in Texas grew more palatable to the conservatives in the state by 1960. In the presidential election of that year, Nixon failed to claim victory, but he did attract more loyal and true Republicans to the ticket than any other GOP candidate before him. In subsequent elections, the number of Republicans increased, but, because of the increase in the state’s population, so did the Democrats. A noticeable shift in the vote percentage occurred only after Republican candidates began linking liberalism to Democratic candidates. John Tower provided a welcome boost to the state party. Other GOP candidates ran strong campaigns, only to lose by slim margins on election day. The Republicans longed to implant a two-party system in the state, but they had to learn how to win the close races in order to do so. The GOP also needed consistent wins at every level of government in order to achieve its objectives. By 1968, favorable election

⁷⁷Box, OH 967, 7-8; Campbell, OH 969, 20-22.

returns showed that Republican party in Texas appeared closer to its goal than the decade before. Both the selection of electable candidates and the ever-increasing support base created by the women helped gradually loosen the hold the Democratic party had held on the state for almost a century. The conservative Democratic establishment had softened. In the following decade, dream became reality as the GOP finally infiltrated every level of government in the state.

CHAPTER 7

THE MAKING OF A TWO-PARTY STATE

1968-1978

Texas Republicans realized that until they could secure the rural vote and win competitive races from the courthouse to the governor's seat, they would never be able to implant a two-party system in the state. Although the GOP had managed over the years to carry the state for several presidential hopefuls, it had never significantly penetrated statewide or local races. In a decade overshadowed by the modern women's liberation movement, the Sharpstown Scandal, and the Watergate debacle, no one would have predicted that the Republican party would have been able to use this time effectively to achieve its ultimate goal. But, as the Democratic party continued to draw upon the liberal and minority vote, the Republican party continued to attract white conservative Democrats and independents. Although faced with serious issues involving women's rights, equal pay, and abortion, the Republican Women also seemed to grow through adversity and emerged in the mid-1970s stronger than ever. Between 1968 and 1978, the Texas Republican Party matured through persistence and continuity, all the while faced with challenges. When Republican William P. ("Bill") Clements, Jr., won the governor's race in 1978, the Texas GOP finally brought two-party politics to the state.

The feminist movement emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s and demanded changes. A feminist historian, Glenna Matthews, declared that supporters of the movement sought changes that challenged “long-held stereotypes that men held regarding women’s role in society.” These demands, however, were nothing new; rather, they represented the continuation of a struggle that had begun decades earlier. After suffragists gained the right to vote through the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, they refused to let the fight for equality die. They believed the vote was merely the first step towards parity, and, therefore, they began a push for the passage of an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the United States Constitution, whereby women and men would be treated equally under the law. While the majority of American women assumed an apathetic attitude toward political and social issues, including the ERA, a small number of early advocates maintained an interest in securing further improvements in the legal and social status for all women. Not ready to enact such a change, the federal legislature tabled or ignored the ERA for decades. After almost fifty years, however, American women once again found themselves on the threshold of redefining their role in society. The rebirth of feminist issues soon gave way to the modern women’s liberation movement, which quickly engulfed American society.¹

The barriers women faced during the late 1960s and early 1970s were reminiscent of those encountered decades earlier. Ironically, the main obstacle confronting ERA

¹Glenna Matthews, The Rise of Public Woman: Woman’s Power and Woman’s Place in the United States, 1630-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 180, 231; Robert A. Calvert and Arnoldo De Leon, The History of Texas (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1990), 393.

advocates was the opposition of other women, not the government. The majority of women did not wish to sacrifice protective legislation for equal rights. These protectionists feared losing maternity benefits and being forced to fight along the front lines during wartime. Supporters of the amendment, however, were willing to forfeit protective legislation and claimed that they were more interested in improving women's legal and property rights and eliminating discrimination. Debate continued for years concerning the scope and personal interpretations of the amendment. ERA supporters eventually realized that they not only had to convince Congress, but they also had to sway the opinion of the majority of American women. The inherent second problem became how radical or forceful should their efforts be to secure passage.²

A series of developments in the early 1960s forced the Texas Republican women to face the changing social scene and to reach a consensus regarding their stand on political policy and women's public roles by the end of the decade. Women received a direct challenge in 1963 when Betty Friedan published The Feminine Mystique and likened marriage and motherhood to a dehumanizing "housewife trap." She declared that the "happy housewife" image was simply a sham and that the majority of American suburban homemakers experienced depression and loneliness and possessed no sense of identity. Friedan encouraged women to seek social, cultural, educational, political, and recreational goals that focused on "self," rather than family. She instructed women to

²Patricia G. Zelman, Women, Work, and National Policy: The Kennedy-Johnson Years (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1980), 7-21; Sheila M. Rothman, Women's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1978), 157-64.

shake their stifling predicaments and to seek professional or political careers outside of the home. Friedan admitted that her “new life plan for women” would not be free from conflict, but she concluded that the struggle would eventually result in fulfillment and “self-definition.” Regardless of the validity of Friedan’s viewpoint, the author prompted a ground swell of queries concerning the satisfaction of American women in the home and the discriminatory practices surrounding them in the community.³

During the same year, the United States Congress passed the Equal Pay Act. This measure guaranteed women equal pay for equal work. The measure did not, however, grant women equal opportunity or equal pay for “comparable” work. Women received equal opportunity in the workforce the following year with the insertion of the word “sex” in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. At this point, Friedan’s arguments could easily have been disregarded, because, following the passage of these two new laws, women attained the opportunity to challenge unfair treatment in the court system when they detected a problem of discrimination.⁴

These measures, however, did not ameliorate the intensifying debate concerning the status of women in American society, and, furthermore, they prompted a plethora of lawsuits decrying discrimination in the workplace. During the mid-1960s reactionary opinions from both liberal and conservative elements mounted. The more liberal-minded

³Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 1963), 333, 336, 338, 340, 363.

⁴Congressional Record, House, 1964, 88th Cong., 2nd Sess., 2577; Congressional Quarterly, Inc., Congressional Quarterly Almanac (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), 348.

women organized the National Organization of Women (NOW) in 1966. Soon, this group formed the largest and most prominent organization in the modern women's liberation movement. In stating their purpose and goal, the members of NOW focused on obtaining equal rights. They stood against all forms of protective legislation, unless the measure extended to men as well, and they fought against all forms of perceived discrimination against women. The participants of the women's liberation movement grew in their willingness to agitate for their rights, assuming a tact similar to that of African Americans in their quest for equality. Eventually, the Democratic party, which advocated equality and individual opportunity, more readily accepted the liberals who led the women's movement.⁵

In direct opposition to NOW, ultra-conservative Republican Phyllis Schlafly built a coalition that focused on the traditional values of the American family. Schlafly, a Missouri native, had worked for the GOP for many years, which included making an unsuccessful bid for the U.S. Congress in 1952. In 1964 she authored A Choice Not An Echo, which endorsed the presidential campaign of ultra-conservative Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater. Throughout the 1960s, Schlafly gained prominence and a following because of her active opposition to the women's liberation movement, and in May 1967

⁵Jo Freeman, The Politics of Women's Liberation: A Case Study of An Emerging Social Movement and Its Relation to the Policy Process (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1975), 74-5; Cynthia Harrison, On Account of Sex: The Politics of Women's Issues, 1945-1968 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 218. For a chronology of the actions taken and court cases filed by women who fought discriminatory practices during the 1960s, see Judith Hole and Ellen Levine, Rebirth of Feminism (New York: Quadrangle Books, Inc., 1971), 421-8.

she attempted to impose her coalition at the National Federation of Republican Women's (NFRW) biennial convention. Schlafly openly challenged Gladys O'Donnell, an advocate of "inclusion," for the presidency of the 500,000-member affiliation. While the nominating committee had pre-selected O'Donnell, Schlafly arranged to be nominated from the floor.⁶

The ensuing fight for the presidency of the NFRW placed the Texas delegation in an uncomfortable position. Many state federations across the nation had been organized for decades, but the Texas Federation of Republican Women (TFRW) was only twelve years old. Struggling to build their membership rolls, the state organization could not afford to align with the ultra-conservative faction and risk alienating the independents and conservative Democrats they had been attempting to woo to the state GOP. O'Donnell appeared to be the safest and most logical choice. The Texas delegation, however, was split fifty-fifty between those who favored O'Donnell and "inclusion" and those who favored Schlafly's brand of party zealotry. Some clubs, such as the Metropolitan Women's Club of Fort Worth, wanted to distance themselves from any elements of the women's movement, and they instructed their delegates to cast a vote for Schlafly before leaving for the convention.⁷

⁶Bill Hunter, "Probably in Dallas, Showdown Hinted By GOP Women," Dallas Morning News, August 22, 1967.

⁷"Texas GOP Women Split Over National Candidates," in "1960s Articles" folder, Texas Federation of Republican Women Historian's Collection, in the home of Annette Hopkins, San Angelo, Texas (hereafter cited as TFRW Historian's Collection, Hopkins).

Other club members agreed with the goals espoused by the feminists. Some critics argued that liberals were attempting to take over the Republican organization, but according to Barbara Man, national committeewoman from Texas and a member of the NFRW election committee, conservative and ultra-conservative forces were battling for the leadership position.⁸ No doubt, a number of liberal Republican women sought representation, but O'Donnell's "unity" supporters believed that the federation was large enough to support divergent opinions.⁹

Rumors abounded that the Texas delegation would align with Schlafly's camp. Once the convention began, however, TFRW leaders appeared to support O'Donnell. TFRW president, Ginny Pearson, announced that she backed O'Donnell because she represented a majority of Republican women. Pearson felt comfortable with "inclusion." Rita Bass, the federation's campaign activities chair, agreed with Pearson, arguing that "unity" should be the goal for all members in the election. The confrontation between the two camps grew so turbulent that the NFRW hired the Pinkerton Detective Agency to monitor voting machines at the convention. Schlafly's forces demanded to be allowed to oversee the voting process as well, and by election time O'Donnell supporters had

⁸Traditional conservatives were primarily concerned with minimizing the role of the federal government in the economy, for example they stood against the New Deal and against governmental regulations in business. Ultra-conservatives held this view as well, but were additionally, and perhaps ironically, in favor of governmental intervention as it applied to institutionalizing their moral and religious values, for example they were against homosexual rights, against abortion, and in favor of school prayer.

⁹Ginny Pearson to Babs Johnson, February 3, 1967, in "Texas Federation Convention/National 1967" folder; "Texas GOP Women Split Over National Candidates," in "1960s Articles" folder, in TFRW Historian's Collection, Hopkins.

secured permission to act as poll watchers, also. When the showdown concluded, O'Donnell emerged as the victor. The leaders of the Texas delegation then turned to prepare for a similar battle at the state convention where the TFRW membership would choose between the philosophy of "unity" or "opposition."¹⁰

After losing her bid for the NFRW presidency, Schlafly created the Eagle Trust Fund, and she encouraged Republican women's clubs throughout the country to divert a portion of their national dues away from the NFRW in order to support her new ultra-conservative faction. Most of the Texas clubs had paid membership dues prior to the national convention, so initially support for the Eagle Trust Fund from Texas was slight. While no identifiable "Schlafly faction" emerged at the state convention, other "opposition" groups who had learned how to challenge established leadership at the national convention made themselves known.¹¹

At the biennial convention in October 1967, the TFRW had to decide whether the opposition group or the unity group would drive its future. Ultra-conservatives, who exhibited little tolerance for any level of feminism, tended to comprise the opposition coalition. These women rejected the ideals of the women's liberation movement. While not all members of the unity coalition embraced the radical tactics displayed in the women's liberation movement, most accepted a wide range of political views. In fact, many of the unity backers also supported the fight for the ERA. During the convention,

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Bill Hunter, "Showdown Hinted By GOP Women," Dallas Morning News, August 22, 1967.

Irene Wischer, past president of the TFRW, called for harmony and inclusion. Quoting California governor Ronald Reagan, she pronounced, "It is not your duty, responsibility or privilege to tear down or attempt to destroy others in the tent." Peter O'Donnell, Jr., of Dallas, urged the women to ban together to work for Republican success and to advance the two-party system. Additionally, Senator John Tower addressed the group and stressed the need for unity in the upcoming 1968 elections.¹²

Although complaints arose at the convention concerning the TFRW leadership and several candidate nominations were offered from the floor, the delegates confirmed the entire slate of pre-selected candidates. The unity forces won out. Mrs. Phillip Collins of the White Rock North Republican Women's Club summed up the consensus when she proclaimed, "Unity is possible without unanimity." TFRW members elected Beryl Milburn as their new federation president with no opposition. A very popular and dynamic worker for the state GOP for years, Milburn observed that a "deep schism" never existed among the Texas women. Although she believed that the extent of liberalism in the organization appeared to be "very, very slight" and "almost negligible," in her acceptance speech she promised to "give all ideas and viewpoints fair and

¹²Mrs. Forrest R. Mitchell, President Austin Republican Women's Club and Mrs. Irving L. McCracken, Jr., President Capitol City Republican Women's Club to Fellow Presidents, August 7, 1967, and "Statement: Mrs. Beryl Milburn," in "Texas Federation 1967/National 1967" folder, TFRW Historian's Collection, Hopkins; Carolyn Barta, "Mismanagement Charged, Republican Women Expecting Showdown," Dallas Morning News, October 9, 1967; Mary Brinkerhoff, "Which Are Hawks, Which Are Doves? GOP Women Discuss Internal Unity and Opposition," Dallas Morning News, October 28, 1967; Carolyn Barta, "GOP Women Fight It Out Gentlemanly," Dallas Morning News, October 29, 1967; "TFRW Picks Beryl Milburn As New State President," The Texas Republican 7 (November/December, 1967), 2.

objective consideration.” With this convention, the TFRW set the precedent for the state organization to be “inclusive” in nature. Choosing to accept divergent opinions under their “tent” appeared to be the wiser option, because they remained reliant on independents and conservative Democrats to help build the grassroots organization. Turning to conservative Republican opposition factions, like Schlafly’s coalition, would have dealt a fatal blow to the process of implementing a two-party system in the state.¹³

The 1969 biennial convention flowed smoothly with no hint of opposition, and with the 1970 elections approaching, the Texas women put ideological debates aside and worked for the election of GOP candidates. The state Republican party leadership turned to the women for help in two major statewide campaigns: Paul Eggers’s bid for governor and George Bush’s race for the U.S. Senate. Because the Republican women had traveled the state conducting a variety of campaign seminars long before either candidate made the decision to run, they felt prepared for the elections. Texas historian John Knaggs stated that “Texas Republicans had bitten a big bullet” in their endeavors in the 1970 campaign season as they sought to elect the first Republican governor in one hundred years and a second Republican senator. In accepting the challenge of party

¹³Mrs. Forrest R. Mitchell, President Austin Republican Women’s Club and Mrs. Irving L. McCracken, Jr., President Capitol City Republican Women’s Club to Fellow Presidents, August 7, 1967, and “Statement: Mrs. Beryl Milburn,” in “Texas Federation 1967/National 1967” folder, TFRW Historian’s Collection, Hopkins; Carolyn Barta, “Mismanagement Charged, Republican Women Expecting Showdown,” Dallas Morning News, October 9, 1967; Mary Brinkerhoff, “Which Are Hawks, Which Are Doves? GOP Women Discuss Internal Unity and Opposition,” Dallas Morning News, October 28, 1967; Carolyn Barta, “GOP Women Fight It Out Gentlemanly,” Dallas Morning News, October 29, 1967; “TFRW Picks Beryl Milburn As New State President,” The Texas Republican 7 (November/December, 1967), 2.

leadership, the TFRW also bit a bullet. Federation president, Cleo Bohls, stated that the organization was “taking a giant step forward in its adoption of two major projects.”

Although neither candidate succeeded, the GOP women unveiled abilities they had never before exhibited in the state.¹⁴

In the Eggers race, the women assumed both scheduling and financial responsibilities for the candidate’s televised campaign appearances. In a project named “Put Paul in the Picture,” the women raised the funds necessary for all of his airtime. Through a mass mailing, women across the state received sheets of “Paul Eggers for Governor” stamps. The federation urged each woman to donate twelve dollars in exchange for the stamps, which they could keep or sell. With every twelve-dollar donation, the TFRW could secure five seconds of televised time for the candidate. The women responded promptly and enthusiastically. Republican hopes ran high for Eggers, who had run a close race against Democrat Preston Smith in 1966 for the governor’s seat. Despite strong support and much optimism, Eggers once again fell short on election day.

¹⁴“TFRW Convention Sets Stage for Victory in ’70,” Partyline 6 (December 1969), 4; “TFRW Women Urged to Make Massive Effort for Eggers and Bush Victories,” Partyline 7 (July/August 1970), 3; “Mrs. Bohls Re-elected TFRW President,” The Texas Republican 8 (November/December 1969), 10; “Texas Republican Women on the Move,” The Texas Republican 8 (March/April 1969), 15; John R. Knaggs, Two-Party Texas: The John Tower Era, 1961-1984 (Austin: Eakin Press, 1986), 145. Beryl Milburn resigned from her position with the federation in August 1969 when she was elected vice-chair of the Republican Party of Texas. Cleo Bohls became the first president of the TFRW to be selected by the executive committee.

He increased his vote percentage from 45.5 percent in 1966 to 46.4 percent in 1970, but not enough to overtake the incumbent governor.¹⁵

George Bush's chances of usurping the Senate seat from liberal Democrat Ralph Yarborough appeared favorable. Senator John Tower agreed that Yarborough would be vulnerable to a conservative challenge. Unfortunately for Bush, conservative Democrat Lloyd Bentsen challenged and defeated Yarborough in the primaries. Bush still seemed poised for the task, and the TFRW stood solidly behind him. For years Bush had consistently credited women for playing a major role in state GOP politics, and they were determined to become a vital part of this campaign. Bush's wife, Barbara, belonged to the Magic Circle Republican Women's Club, a prestigious GOP organization in Houston, and she managed to muster support from her group. Fearful that Bentsen could dent Bush's conservative support base, the state federation engineered "Bush Balloteer Program Pyramids" in order to enlist campaign supporters and volunteers. In this project, balloteers volunteered to sign up prospective Bush voters, who were in turn asked to become balloteers. Every new balloteer received a Bush balloteer bumper sticker, and once volunteers completed their entire "ballot" and secured contributions, they earned a

¹⁵"TFRW Urged to Make Massive Effort for Eggers and Bush Victories," Partyline, 3; Carolyn Barta, Bill Clements: Texian to His Toenails (Austin: Eakin Press, 1996), 7; Richard M. Scammon, ed. America Votes 9: A Handbook of Contemporary American Election Statistics (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1972), 321.

special gold Bush sticker. Mutual admiration existed between Bush and the TFRW, and, not surprisingly, the women worked hard to earn the Bush stickers.¹⁶

Besides running the balloteer program, the women also maintained campaign headquarters, scheduled events around the state, and conducted voter registration drives. The “Bush Belles” handled all other fundraising events. Rita Bass served as chair of the Bush Belles state organization, and the Bush strategy specifically requested that the volunteer corps and teenagers be responsible for pinning on buttons or handing out campaign paraphernalia at shopping centers or other public forums for the candidate.¹⁷

Bush ran a good race, but Bentsen matched his conservatism step-for-step. Both were pro-business, for Bush worked in the oil industry and Bentsen in banking. Both men had established a conservative voting record in the U.S. House of Representatives. Both candidates also lived in Houston, one of the most traditionally conservative areas in the state. The major question of the race remained whether or not Texas should have two Republican senators. In November voters decided against sending two GOP senators to Washington when, in a close race, Bush managed to muster 1,035,794 votes compared to Bentsen’s 1,194,069. Bush, like Eggers, carried the urban counties where the GOP had

¹⁶“TFRW Convention Draws Republican Notables,” Partyline 6 (August 1969), 7; “Texas Women Urged to Make Massive Effort for Eggers and Bush Victories,” Partyline, 3; Knaggs, Two-Party Texas, 155; John G. Tower, Consequences: A Personal and Political Memoir (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), 206-7; Roger M. Olien, From Token to Triumph: The Texas Republicans Since 1920 (Dallas: SMU Press, 1982), 220.

¹⁷Bush 1970 Campaign Handbook, Box 804-18, “General Duties of Bush Belles County Chairmen,” Box 512-1, “Belle Bulletin,” July 13, 1970, Box 512-1, John G. Tower Papers, Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas (hereafter cited as Tower Papers).

been consistently growing for almost twenty years, but a higher than normal voter turn out added substantially to the totals in the traditionally strong, rural Democratic counties. Both of the men running appeared to be popular, and for once voters went to the polling booths to vote for, rather than against, a candidate. The lesson was clear. For the state GOP to win major statewide races, it had to recruit candidates who could appeal to the rural areas of the state while maintaining their urban support. The Texas Republicans desperately needed a boost in order to revive the party following a sluggish election day.¹⁸

Within a few months of the 1970 election, Republicans received the break they had been seeking for decades. As scandal rocked the state Democratic party, the GOP readied themselves to capitalize on the chaos and to exploit fully the malfeasance of the opposition party. In early 1971, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) announced an investigation “of several state officials and businessmen who allegedly profited from illegal manipulation of stock transactions.” The Sharpstown Scandal had begun.¹⁹

Frank Sharp, a Houston financier who controlled the National Banker’s Life Insurance Company and the Sharpstown State Bank, emerged as the major figure in the

¹⁸“Texas Women Urged to Make Massive Effort for Eggers and Bush Victories,” Partyline, 3; “TFRW Convention Draws Republican Notables,” Partyline 6 (August 1969), 7; Tower, Consequences, 206-7; Scammon, ed., America Votes 9, 321; Knaggs, Two-Party Texas, 155.

¹⁹“George Williford to The Members of the Texas Federation of Republican Women,” Partyline 8 (January/February 1971), 2.

probe. Sharp sold stock in his life insurance company to several prominent Democrats with money acquired by unsecured loans. Among others, Governor Preston Smith, State Democratic Chair Dr. Elmer Baum, a number of state legislators, Texas Speaker of the House Gus Mutscher, Mutscher's aides, and his father all reaped financial benefits from Sharp's deal. According to the plan, these insurance company stockholders sold their shares to a Jesuit organization, which had accepted Sharp's financial "advice" and purchased the stock at inflated prices. Ironically, while Smith and Baum netted more than \$50,000 each, Mutscher eventually lost \$322,250 in the fraud. As the scandal unfolded, Attorney General Waggoner Carr, Lieutenant Governor Ben Barnes, and State Treasurer Jesse James became implicated because they also had established questionable business connections with Sharp. Within one year of the initial investigation, the Sharpstown Scandal emerged as one of the GOP's greatest assets. TFRW president, Surrenden Angly, told the organization's members that the scandal only proved that the time had come for the government to operate in a more competitive system, a two-party system. In the 1972 elections, Texans declined to reelect any of the major players involved in the conspiracies. Finally, Texas voters had found a tangible excuse to cross party lines and vote the Republican ticket.²⁰

Texas Republicans fared better than they could have ever expected in the 1972 general election as the party contested the largest number of races in the state GOP

²⁰"Sharpstown Scandal Provides Big Boost for the GOP," 4, and "Sharpstown Scandal Chart," 5, Partyline 9 (February/March 1972); Surrenden Angly, "Surrenden's Summary," Partyline 9 (May/June 1972), 8; Calvert and De Leon, History of Texas, 395-6.

history. Because of the scandalous conduct of the Democratic incumbents, it believed that the Republican challenges could seriously threaten the Democratic stranglehold on state politics. In addition to Nixon's presidential run and Tower's senatorial bid, the GOP also filed for contests involving the gubernatorial office, fourteen congressional districts, thirteen state Senate seats, seventy-one state representative positions, and ten seats on the state board of education. When the November election returns came in, the Republicans had definitely dented the Democratic stronghold.²¹

The presidential and senatorial contests represented the most significant races facing the Texans in 1972 when Texas conservatives embraced Tower and Nixon, overwhelmingly electing them to office. The incumbent Tower, capitalized once again on "womanpower," which had proven successful in his past campaigns. The senator also hired Nola Smith to command his reelection, and in doing so he made history because no woman had ever managed a U.S. senator's campaign. In preparation for the race, Tower and Smith began building a coalition in 1971. Besides identifying prominent oilmen, insurancemen, farmers, real estate brokers, doctors, engineers, cattlemen, lawyers, educators, restaurateurs, and businessmen, the Tower group also sought the names of the most prominent women, the "cream of the crop," throughout the state, regardless of political affiliation.²²

²¹"GOP Primary Offers Opportunity," Partyline 9 (March/April 1972), 6.

²²Tower, Consequences, 129; Gloria Leigh to Republican Officials, April 3, 1972, Pat Vigeon to Rita Bass, n.d., and Francis Lipe to Leigh, 1972, Box 512-2, Tower Papers.

Tower reiterated many times that women played an extremely important role in any campaign, and in 1972 the women proved him correct. Believing the reelection of Tower to be of prime significance, the TFRW wholeheartedly endorsed his candidacy. Tower chose Mary Kleberg, wife of the board chair of the famed King Ranch, to head Women Power for Tower, the division that coordinated the women's activities in the senator's reelection campaign. Lou Tower, the senator's wife, campaigned relentlessly across the state. Touted as the senator's "greatest asset," Lou had previously gained invaluable experience when she toured the state for Tower in 1966 and for Bush in 1970. In fact, some women claimed that they voted for Tower only because they "liked his wife."²³

Smith and Kleberg created a "Tower Pyramid Program," designed to increase the women's volunteer corps through a series of "pyramid parties" where a county Tower Pyramid chair enlisted one woman to throw a party for six women. Her guests could only accept if they agreed to throw a pyramid party themselves for five other guests, who, in turn, agreed to have a party for four guests. Those women then hosted a party for three guests, who held a party for two guests, who joined together and invited one guest to meet them for a get-together. The women could promote any type of gathering such as bridge parties, luncheons, swim parties, coffees, a movie outing, an art exhibit, or any

²³"News Release," July 25, 1972, Box 512-13, "News Release, Lou Tower Biography," n.d., and "On Behalf of Husband's Candidacy, Lou Tower Touring State By Bus During October," October 6, 1972, Box 512-6, Tower Papers; "Texans Must Re-elect Senator Tower," Partyline 9 (May/June 1972), 5; "Talents, Time to Campaign Victories," Amarillo News and Globe-Times, November 5, 1972.

other activity that would increase the interest of the women. The project worked and allowed the women's ranks to grow exponentially.²⁴

Tower later observed that the 1972 contest was the most difficult and hard-fought race of his career for several reasons. First, this reelection attempt occurred during a presidential election year. He feared that increased voter turnout would hurt him in the traditionally strong Democratic rural counties. Second, Nixon's people kept the president at arm's length from any candidates not identified as a "guaranteed shoo-in." Officially, most Texans still declared themselves Democrats, so the administration viewed Tower as "vulnerable," and, therefore, a liability. Last, Tower faced Harold ("Barefoot") Sanders, a liberal, in the general election. For the first time in his career, Tower could not count on the dissatisfied liberals to "go fishing" on election day; therefore, he had to stump diligently to persuade Texas conservatives to vote the Republican ticket. Tower managed to tie Sanders to the liberal Democratic roster led by presidential candidate George McGovern. He need not have worried. In an election where the conservatives turned out en masse, the incumbent comfortably retained his seat, winning by more than 310,000 votes, the largest margin of his career. Tower, who received 13 percent fewer votes than Nixon, managed to capitalize on a state Republican landslide prompted by the incumbent president.²⁵

²⁴"Texans Must Re-elect Senator Tower," Partyline; "Tower Pyramid Program," Box 512-12, Tower Papers.

²⁵Tower, Consequences, 206-8; Knaggs, Two-Party Texas, 174; Olien, Token to Triumph, 231-2.

For the first time since Eisenhower's victories in the 1950s, a Republican carried Texas in the presidential election. In general, the Nixon administration pleased Texans. The Vietnam War was winding down, most of the troops had come home, and U.S. casualties had fallen from 350 per week to approximately 10. The president came out against forced busing of school children, which had been implemented in an effort to achieve racial balance in the public schools. The riots, burnings, and campus unrest so prevalent in the late 1960s had finally died down. Conservative Texans seemed supportive of the administration's political stands. The Democratic opponent, McGovern, aligned himself much too closely with the liberal element of the Democratic party for Texas tastes. McGovern pushed for immediate withdrawal from Vietnam, mandated abolition of the draft, and offered amnesty to draft resisters. He also took a strong stand for the civil rights of the blacks. According to historian Roger Olien, as an anti-war /pro-civil rights candidate, McGovern lost Texas the day the Democratic party nominated him.²⁶

In the 1972 campaign, Nixon toured every state in the South, which was a first for any president, and he visited Texas three times during the election year. Bill Clements and Eric Jonsson co-chaired the state's Committee to Re-elect the President (CREEP), and they quickly implemented a strategy that had proven successful in the state – “womanpower.” The TFRW had grown to 6,132 members in 1972, ranking as the largest

²⁶“President Nixon's Reelection Vital to Texas,” Partyline 9 (May/June 1972), 4; Tower, Consequences, 207-8; Olien, Token to Triumph, 231; Tanya Melnich, The Republican War Against Women: An Insider's Report from Behind the Lines (New York: Bantam Books, 1996), 18.

federation in the South and the fourteenth largest in the nation. Surrenden Angly, TFRW president, proclaimed that the state organization had become “a potentially very potent force in electing more Republicans to office.” Several individual women exerted their influence to help lead the president’s effort in the state. Rita Bass, long-time GOP activist from Dallas, led the state voter registration drives and the get-out-the-vote programs. Texan Anne Armstrong, co-chair of the Republican National Committee (RNC) and one of the most admired Republican women in the nation, conducted a tour of “Anne Armstrong’s Simply Amazing, Three Dimensional, Two-Toned Transcontinental Nixon-Agnew, New Majority, People Machine.” Beginning in Wichita Falls, Armstrong traveled throughout the country mustering enthusiasm and support for the GOP ticket. Nixon’s Texas team also hired Nancy Brataas, a Minnesota congresswoman, to organize cadres of telephone bank volunteers. Linda Montgomery, a former Dallas newspaper reporter, handled press relations for the GOP candidates.²⁷

By joining the TFRW volunteers with the efforts of popular political women and paid campaign workers, the Texas CREEP added a new dimension to “womanpower.” In November, Nixon claimed Texas in a landslide, capturing 66.2 percent of the total vote. TFRW president Angly exalted that the GOP women had “truly left our infancy and are

²⁷Dixie Clem to Texas Federation of Republican Women, n.d., in “Anna Clara Rice Clippings/First Tribute to Women 1979” folder, TFRW Historian’s Collection, Hopkins; Barta, Bill Clements, 117-8, 120; Surrenden Angly, “President’s Column,” Partyline 9 (January/February 1972), 8; “Texas Republicans Achieve Big Victory,” 3, and Surrenden Angly, “Surrenden’s Summary,” 8, Partyline 9 (November/December 1972); Richard M. Scammon, ed., America Votes 10: A Handbook of Contemporary American Elections Statistics (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1973), 349.

now in adolescence.” The federation members felt greatly encouraged by the 1972 results. In securing their biggest victory in the state’s history, state Republicans believed that as conservative voters became more receptive to the GOP, they distanced themselves from a perceptively liberal state Democratic party.²⁸

The Texas women received an added bonus in 1972 with the elections of Betty Andujar, from Fort Worth, as the first Republican woman ever elected to the state Senate, and Kay Bailey, of Houston, as the first Republican woman ever elected to the Texas House of Representatives. Andujar opined that the Sharpstown scandal, which implicated so many prominent Democrats, opened the door for GOP candidates. Similar in background, both women hailed from urban areas comprised mostly of middle-class whites. Active in the TFRW, both candidates credited the efforts of the female volunteers, stating that they were crucial to obtaining victory. Andujar believed that “working a precinct” proved to be the best strategy in a state dominated by Democratic traditions. In this program, the party developed information about how individual precincts voted. If a precinct showed a low Republican turnout in previous elections, then candidates wasted no time in that area. Using voting history information, candidates identified the best precincts, obtained printouts of the names, addresses, and telephone

²⁸Dixie Clem to Texas Federation of Republican Women, n.d., in “Anna Clara Rice Clippings/First Tribute to Women 1979” folder, TFRW Historian’s Collection, Hopkins; Barta, Bill Clements, 117-8, 120; Surrenden Angly, “President’s Column,” Partyline 9 (January/February 1972), 8; “Texas Republicans Achieve Big Victory,” 3, and Surrenden Angly, “Surrenden’s Summary,” 8, Partyline 9 (November/December 1972); Richard M. Scammon, ed., America Votes 10: A Handbook of Contemporary American Elections Statistics (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1973), 349.

numbers of all residents, and then solicited their support. In 1972, this strategy worked well for the women. Neither Bailey nor Andujar reported any discrimination during their contests, and they claimed that fellow legislators accepted them as equals when they arrived in Austin. In a pamphlet prepared by the RNC, Anne Armstrong declared, “The single most important factor in how far and how rapidly women will advance in government is – the number of qualified women willing to run for public office now.” Bailey and Andujar definitely opened the door to other Texas GOP women who wanted to serve the state in an official position, not just as a volunteer.²⁹

As Nixon began his second term, the future of the state GOP women brightened when the president appointed several prominent Texas women to positions of increased responsibility and prestige. Nola Smith, 1968 director of women’s activities for the Nixon for President Committee and 1972 director of Senator Tower’s reelection campaign, became a staff assistant to the president. Anne Armstrong, Texas national committeewoman and vice-chair of the RNC, accepted an appointment as White House counselor to the president, which had a cabinet ranking, and, as a result, she became the highest-ranking woman in government at that time. Her responsibilities focused on activities and opportunities for women. Armstrong took her new assignment seriously and began a new series of campaign seminars and sponsored programs designed to recruit

²⁹Betty Andujar, “Oral Interview with Betty Andujar,” OH 964 (University Archives, Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas), 15, 18-19; “New Look in Texas Legislature,” 5, and Surrenden Angly, “Surrenden’s Summary,” 8, Partyline 9 (November/December 1972); “Women Who Win,” Partyline 10 (March/April 1973), 3.

female candidates. Across the board, most Texas conservatives seemed pleased with the direction of the Nixon administration at the close of 1972.³⁰

Texas Democrats, on the other hand, feared that their party was breaking apart in 1973. On January 22, Lyndon Johnson died, and shortly thereafter former governor John Connally officially switched to the GOP. Connally's defection did not come as a surprise because he had been supporting various Republican candidates for years, but his turnabout aroused a great deal of publicity and party switching. Armstrong declared that Connally and the other "new Republicans" crossed the party lines because the consistent conservative nature of the GOP better aligned with their political philosophy than "the increasingly leftist philosophy of the National Democratic Party." Although the 1972 elections had frightened them, the Democrats gained renewed hope once the dark shadow of scandal fell over the Nixon administration.³¹

During the 1972 election year, the Democrats established their party headquarters in the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C. When those headquarters were burglarized in June 1972, suspicions about Republican involvement arose. President Nixon and members of his administration denied any connection or wrong doing, but by April 1973 rumors abounded as the president accepted the resignations of his two closest aides, Bob Haldeman and John Erlichman, and fired Counsel to the President, John Dean. Other resignations soon followed. Realizing that the integrity of the office was at risk,

³⁰"Anne Armstrong Honored," Partyline 10 (January/February 1973), 6; "Texans Receive Federal Appointments," Partyline 10 (November/December 1973), 2.

³¹Knaggs, Two-Party Texas, 18.

Nixon assured the American public, “This office is a sacred trust and I am determined to be worthy of the trust.” As time progressed, however, Nixon found it increasingly difficult to defend himself.³²

Nixon’s problems only multiplied. On October 10, 1973, Vice-President Spiro T. Agnew resigned from office as he pled *nolo contendere* to tax evasion charges stemming from his tenure as governor of Maryland. The president selected Gerald Ford to replace Agnew as vice-president. By the time of Agnew’s resignation, a Senate committee was already investigating Nixon’s involvement in a cover-up of the Watergate break-in. Soon after, the House began impeachment proceedings against the President. Republicans wanted to believe the president in his claims. In 1974, TFRW president Barbara Lewis endorsed the president and proclaimed “Watergate has not hurt us.” She added, “a few individuals, not the Republican party, were at fault for Watergate,” and that “the party as a whole has no reason to apologize.” In retrospect, Lewis, appeared overly optimistic. Charges of White House misconduct continued to mount. In July 1974, the Supreme Court directed Nixon to relinquish tape recordings of White House conversations. Tapes released in early August clearly implicated the president for his involvement in the cover-up almost from the beginning. As a result, President Nixon resigned from office on

³²Richard Nixon, “The Watergate Case, Washington, April 30, 1973,” in Speeches of the American Presidents, ed. by Janet Podell and Steven Anzovin (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1988), 688-91.

August 9, 1974, and Ford moved up to fill the vacated office of the presidency. Across the nation, the American public reeled from the scandal.³³

TFRW president Lewis's earlier statement that Watergate could not hurt the Republicans proved to be mistaken. Membership figures in the state federation fell from the all-time high of 6,132 in 1972, to 5,160 in 1973, and to 4,518 in 1974. The second vice-president of the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW) and past-president of TFRW, Cleo Bohls, and future NFRW president, Betty Heitman, both concluded that Watergate hurt not only the party, but individuals as well. Heading into the 1974 elections, only three months after the president's resignation, they feared rampant voter apathy.³⁴

Although the Texas GOP fielded a record number of candidates, both men and women, for the 1974 elections, Republicans realized few gains nationally. In an election that showed the lowest voter turnout in U.S. history, only one in three eligible voters cast a ballot. Across the board, voters removed forty-three Republican representatives from the U.S. Congress. Despite the fact that the media proclaimed the 1974 national elections

³³Knaggs, Two-Party Texas, 181; "TFRW Convention Produces Unity of Purpose," Partyline 10 (November/December 1973), 6; Carol Schlueter, "Republican Women Vow Strong," in 1975 Scrapbook, Texas Federation of Republican Women Headquarters, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as TFRW Headquarters); Richard Nixon, "The Resignation Speech, Washington, August 8, 1974," in Speeches of the American Presidents, ed. by Podell and Anzovin, 691-3.

³⁴Barbara Lewis, "President's Postscript, TFRW Can Provide Key to Victory," Partyline 11 (July/August 1974), 8; Dixie Clem to Texas Federation of Republican Women, n.d., in "Anna Clara Rice Clippings/First Tribute to Women 1979" folder, TFRW Historian's Collection, Hopkins; Terry Hayes, "Women Have 'Unlimited' Roles as Republicans," in 1975 Scrapbook, Nancy Smith, "Every Bit the Politician," in 1978 Scrapbook, TFRW Headquarters.

to be a disaster for the Republican party, the Texas GOP actually fared well. Following an election in which the TFRW dedicated itself to 360,745 volunteer hours, Texas Republican victories included a member of the U.S. Senate, two representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives, three state senators, sixteen members of the state House, and fifty-three officeholders at the county level. Texas was the only state in the nation to see a net gain of Republicans elected to office in November, for the Texas GOP realized a net gain of nine in the election. In the 1974 election, the Republican women remained determined not to allow the malfeasance of Nixon's administration wipe out all of the progress that the party had made over the past decade. Despite the low voter turnout, the women's relentless effort on the campaign trail resulted in state GOP victories at a time when most of the nation still reeled from Watergate. Realizing that deep scars still existed in many people's trust of political officials and that faith in the executive office had been seriously damaged, the TFRW faithful responded to the crisis by "getting back to the basics," focusing on issues and working to overcome the pall of corruption.³⁵

³⁵Barbara Lewis, "President's Postscript, TFRW Can Provide Key to Victory," Partyline 11 (July/August 1974), 8; Dixie Clem to Texas Federation of Republican Women, n.d., in "Anna Clara Rice Clippings/First Tribute to Women 1979" folder, TFRW Historian's Collection, Hopkins; Terry Hayes, "Women Have 'Unlimited' Roles as Republicans," in 1975 Scrapbook, Nancy Smith, "Every Bit the Politician," in 1978 Scrapbook, TFRW Headquarters; "Republican Party Fields Record Number of Women Candidates," Partyline 11 (May/June 1974), 3; "GOP Opens Door in '74," Partyline 11 (March/April 1974), 5; "Election Analysis 1974," Partyline 11 (November/December 1974), 3; "Growth of Republican Officeholders" from www.texasgop.org/library/growth.html, September 14, 1999; Barbara Lewis, "President's Postscript, Excitement Mounts," Partyline 12 (January/February 1975), 8; Lewis, "TFRW Officials Meet in March," Partyline 12 (March/April 1975), 5; Lewis, "A Challenge To Be Met," Partyline 12 (May/June 1975), 8.

Observing that “there is no vacation in politics,” Lewis pointed out that just over a year remained until the spring primaries and the next general election in 1975. GOP women responded and immediately “got back to basics.” Republican women’s clubs hosted campaign workshops and offered seminars on topics ranging from polling techniques, voter identification processes, fund raising, direct mailings, and campaigns laws to the new computer uses in campaigns.³⁶

In a TFRW sponsored workshop in 1975, Frank Crowley, Dallas County GOP chair, stressed the importance of manning the phone banks at headquarters. He also pointed out that the women who worked the telephones had to be updated daily regarding the significant issues surrounding the candidates. Polly Sowell, state vice-chair of the Republican party, gave pointers on campaigning in the rural counties, an area where the Republicans had been deficient in their efforts. She observed that in Texas the unsuccessful GOP candidates typically pulled more than 50 percent of the vote from the urban areas and approximately 45 percent of the vote from the median areas, but only about 35 percent from the rural areas. If Texas Republicans wanted to implement a two-party system, they had to increase their efforts in the median and rural counties. Cathy Smyth, TFRW president (1979-1981), outlined the details of organizing a campaign. She stressed the need for careful planning so that all activities peak on election day. Smyth also instructed the women to develop as many titles and chairmen as possible, because “involvement breeds interest.” Establishing a budget and setting up a finance committee

³⁶“GOP Women Attend Campaign Courses,” in 1978 Scrapbook, TFRW Headquarters; Lewis, “A Challenge To Be Met,” 8.

ranked as a priority in a successful campaign. Campaign headquarters, according to Smyth, should always be easily accessible, located in the center of the campaign area, and air-conditioned. “Keep it simple, keep it fun, and keep it manned” became the mantra of the campaign organizers.³⁷

While most women remained dedicated to helping institute the two-party system through grassroots efforts, some began to picture themselves as candidates. Barbara Campbell, TFRW president (1983-1987), observed that although the volunteer labor proved necessary for a campaign, all too often “when the election was over, [the women] would go back onto the shelf until the next time we were needed.”³⁸ The TFRW, therefore, began seeking qualified women to become candidates or appointees in politics, industry, government, and education. In order to identify specific women for an opportunity, the federation established a “talent bank,” where biographical data was stored and then sent out for consideration when openings occurred. During her tenure as TFRW president from 1977 to 1979, Vera Carhart encouraged women to seek office. Carhart stressed to the members that when GOP women sought qualified candidates for political office, to consider themselves first. She pushed them to fill vacant slots on the ballot. Alma Box, president of the Dallas County Council of Republican Women and a District Director of the TFRW, echoed Campbell’s and Carhart’s exhortations and averred that she believed that women could be successful as candidates because through

³⁷“GOP Campaign Workshop Held in Tyler Today,” in 1975 Scrapbook, TFRW Headquarters.

³⁸Barbara Campbell, “Oral Interview with Barbara Campbell,” OH 969 (University Archives, Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas), 16.

their volunteer commitment “they learned how to run campaigns and what it takes to win a campaign.” To support female candidates, the TFRW also established the “We Care” financial fund to back women interested in pursuing a political career. TFRW members changed the name of the fund to the Cleo Bohls Fund in 1975, honoring their past-president who had lost a bout with cancer. Following the victories of Andujar and Bailey in 1972, and their subsequent reelections, Texas GOP women grew in confidence and increasingly began to view themselves as viable candidates.³⁹

Women also began considering their own candidacy for office because at times during the 1970s they believed that the men they elected failed to support their views wholeheartedly. Both the NFRW and TFRW stood solidly behind the ERA, which guaranteed women equal rights and protection under the law. After decades of struggle, the ERA finally passed in Texas in 1972 and in the U.S. Congress in 1973. The measure failed, however, to achieve national approval. The main argument surrounding the legislation continued to be an interpretation of “how equal is equal,” and no consensus appeared near.⁴⁰

³⁹“Talent Bank Set Up For Women Candidates,” and “GOP Women Launch Female Job Talent Bank,” in 1975 Scrapbook, TFRW Headquarters; Vera Carhart, “Vera’s Viewpoints,” Partyline 16 (July/August 1979), 8; “TFRW Board of Directors Meeting,” Partyline 16 (January/February 1979), 10; Alma Box, “Oral Interview with Alma Box, OH 967 (University Archives, Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas), 9; “TFRW Board Meets in San Antonio,” Partyline 15 (July/August 1978), 5-6.

⁴⁰“Members Urged to Support Equal Rights Amendment,” Partyline 7 (July/August 1970), 7; Calvert and De Leon, History of Texas, 393-4.

As contentious as the ERA appeared to be, the issue of abortion generated even more controversy. In 1970 Texas law permitted abortion only when pregnancy endangered a woman's life; however, in Roe v. Wade, Texas lawyer Sarah Weddington challenged that law. She based her case on an interpretation of the Ninth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guaranteed an individual's right to privacy. Weddington argued that laws dictating the conditions under which a woman could terminate a pregnancy constituted an invasion of her privacy. The combination of a constitutional question and a controversial subject assured widespread attention and contention. In 1973 the Supreme Court upheld a district court ruling that supported the claims in Roe v. Wade, thereby invalidating most restrictions in state abortion laws and, in effect, legalizing abortions. While the decision provided an immense psychological boost and an important victory for the feminist movement, women of all political persuasions supported the ruling. Most significantly, the decision initiated an intense national debate on the morality of abortion. Ultimately, the National Republican Party decided upon an anti-abortion, or pro-life, stance, against the wishes of a large number of Republican women.⁴¹

Although it seemed to be a positive step for women's rights, Roe v. Wade actually put the Republican women in an awkward position. According to long-time party activist

⁴¹Sarah Hughes, "Oral Interview with Sarah Hughes," OH 489 (University Archives, Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas), 17-9; James Riddlesperger, Jr., "Sarah T. Hughes: Biography of a Federal District Judge" (MA. thesis, North Texas State University, 1980), 86, 90-4; Roe v. Wade, 314 F. Supp. 1217 (U.S. Dist. Ct. 1970).

Tanya Melnich, a Gallup Poll taken prior to the 1972 Republican National Convention “showed that 68 percent of Republicans believed that abortion was a decision that should be left up to a woman and her doctor.” Anne Armstrong, RNC co-chair, said that women expressed interest in placing a pro-abortion plank on the GOP platform in 1972, but the final draft, while it did include an endorsement for the ERA and support for equal pay for equal work, did not address women’s reproductive rights. If the Republican leadership did not want to come out in favor of abortion, then the women believed that the issue should be excluded from politics altogether.⁴²

After Roe v. Wade the Republican party began to align more closely with the forces opposed to abortion. As the religious right grew in disdain for and in opposition to abortion, the GOP moved closer to them, fearing the loss of their support. Betty Andujar charged that abortion and the religious right had placed “undue influence” on the GOP, much like labor had on the Democratic party. Like other Republican women, she believed that first trimester abortions should be legal.⁴³ Alma Box asserted similar claims, observing that she simply did not like to see abortion made the focal point of the party, and that it should not be used as a litmus test for the GOP.⁴⁴ Carol Reed, political director of John Tower’s 1978 campaign and former TFRW vice-president, averred that the government had “absolutely no place in the issue.” She further stressed that

⁴²“Miami Convention, Women Delegates Increase in the GOP,” Dallas Morning News, July 36, 1972; Melnich, Republican War Against Women, 30; Calvert and De Leon, History of Texas, 394.

⁴³Andujar, OH 964, 32-3.

⁴⁴Box, OH 967, 22-4.

reproduction was a health and insurance matter and, therefore, federal funding should never be involved.⁴⁵ Florence Shapiro, future state senator, took a pro-choice stand, but accepted some restrictions, such as parental notification for girls under eighteen and a ban on all second and third trimester abortions. She observed that “Republicans believe people ought to be the master of their own fate,” and that they want the government out of their lives, except when it comes to abortion.⁴⁶ Barbara Campbell believed that this inconsistency could potentially break the GOP and expressed that she did not think “that a one issue thing is the betterment for all of us in our party.” These Texas women represented the opinions of many, and, believing that female candidates would be more supportive on this issue, they began in earnest to recruit more women candidates for office by the mid- to late-1970s.⁴⁷

In 1976 Bicentennial celebrations absorbed the attentions of most Americans to the detriment of upcoming political races. The nation’s 200th birthday and resulting surge of patriotism, however, came about at an opportune time for Republicans still suffering in the emotional quake of Nixon’s resignation. For those who remained attuned to politics, two viable GOP candidates, President Ford and former California governor Ronald Reagan, roused some Republican interest during the primaries. In Texas, Senator Tower and Beryl Milburn led the fight for Ford, while Ray Hutchison, GOP state chair, led

⁴⁵Carol Reed, “Oral Interview with Carol Reed,” OH 920 (University Archives, Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas), 24-5.

⁴⁶Florence Shapiro, “Oral Interview with Florence Shapiro,” OH 976 (University Archives, Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas), 27-8.

⁴⁷Campbell, OH 969, 42-5.

Reagan supporters. Members of the Reagan camp portrayed Ford as the “accidental president” and capitalized on the blunders and missteps of the president. Reagan quickly gained support from conservative Texans, who agreed with him when he declared that the nation was weak on defense, when he attacked the “giveaway” of the Panama Canal, and when he spoke out against busing and abortion. Although Texans supported Reagan two-to-one in the state primary, Ford secured the GOP nomination; however, he had to support a platform that smacked of Reaganism.⁴⁸

At the other end of the political spectrum, Georgia Governor James (“Jimmy”) Carter won the nomination for the Democratic party. Running as an “outsider” intent on cleaning up Washington, Carter managed to pull the Texas Democratic party together, unlike the state GOP, which seemed unable to unite after the tough primary fight between the Ford and Reagan supporters. In the November general election, Carter bested Ford by a narrow margin, largely due to his support from the South, labor, minorities, and rural areas. In Texas, Carter won by fewer than 100,000 votes, 51.1 percent of the total vote. Historian Roger Olien observed that Ford fell back into the old GOP pattern: he drew strong support in Dallas, Houston, and West Texas but failed to generate much support elsewhere. Happy with a few gains secured in the state legislature and county offices, Texas Republicans seemed content with the 1976 elections,⁴⁹ even though they were no closer to implementing the two-party system than they had been decades before. Within

⁴⁸Knaggs, *Two-Party Texas*, 189-97; Olien, *Token to Triumph*, 237-40.

⁴⁹The state GOP gained three seats in the Texas Legislature and fourteen county offices in the state. See “Growth of Republican Officeholders” from www.texasgop.org/library/growth.html, September 14, 1999.

two short years, however, they would usher in a new era in Texas politics and a genuine two-party state.⁵⁰

The impetus for this change rested in the hands of Bill Clements, a successful international oil drilling contractor, and his new wife, former Republican national committeewoman, Rita Bass Clements. According to the TFRW campaign workshop held in 1975, Clements ran a perfect campaign in 1978: he undertook a massive telephone campaign, he effectively worked the rural counties, and he planned for all of his activities to peak on election day. It was as if he had stolen a page from the TFRW campaign manual.⁵¹

Olien reported that “the slow and uncertain work of building grassroots organization, begun in earnest in 1952 and refined progressively during the 1960s and 1970s, finally paid off in 1978.” By the time of the 1978 general election, the TFRW had grown to approximately 6,000 members and ranked among the ten largest federations in the nation. Within six months of the gubernatorial race, over 1,000 more women joined the state organization. According to Olien, “in the Texas GOP the men provided the candidates and raised the money while the women win elections.” In 1978, with an abundance of campaign experience under their belt, the Texas Republican women gave

⁵⁰Olien, Token to Triumph, 239-40.

⁵¹Bill and Rita Clements met when working on Nixon’s 1972 reelection campaign and married in 1975 while he served as deputy secretary of defense in Ford’s administration and she served as the national committeewoman from Texas. See Barta, Bill Clements, 158-63.

credence to that statement when they came out to support Clements in the fight for the governor's seat.⁵²

The gubernatorial campaign overshadowed all other races during the 1978 election. Clements first had to win the Republican primary against state GOP chair, Ray Hutchison. Both candidates' wives had held prominent positions in Texas politics for years. Hutchison had married former state representative Kay Bailey in April 1978, and Clements's wife, Rita, had served the party in various capacities for more than a decade. While Kay Hutchison campaigned for her husband, Rita Clements proved to be invaluable to the organization, planning, and implementation of her husband's campaign strategies. From the beginning, she served as Clements's most trusted advisor. He admittedly valued her political campaign knowledge and touted her as his "best weapon." At the end of a hard-fought primary, Clements had won the first political contest of his life. He defeated Hutchison by a three-to-one margin, but he also outspent the GOP chair ten-to-one. After spending \$2.2 million on the primary, Bill and Rita Clements immediately turned their energies and money toward winning the November general election.⁵³

⁵²Olien, Token to Triumph, 243, 260; Vera Carhart, "Vera's Viewpoint," Partyline 15 (September/October 1978), 8; "TFRW Board Meets in Houston," Partyline 16 (July/August 1979), 6.

⁵³Jim Collins, "The Political Energy Crisis," Partyline 14 (July/August 1977), 5; Calvert and De Leon, History of Texas, 402; Susan Traylor, "Wife Hits Campaign Trail, Former Legislator in a Different Boat Now," in 1978 Scrapbook, TFRW Headquarters; Barta, Bill Clements, 196-8.

Clements faced moderately liberal Attorney General John Hill in the general election. Hill, who had overcome the incumbent governor, Dolph Briscoe, in the primary, miscalculated the Republican's determination, and he subsequently ran a complacent campaign. He spent the majority of his time creating a "shadow government" to Briscoe and planning out his future administration. Hill told reporters that he expected the November election to be easier than the primary, and therefore he had decided not to run a "day-to-day" campaign.⁵⁴

Clements took the opposite approach. Taking nothing for granted, he immediately assembled a professional staff dedicated to his election. He hired Nola Haerle,⁵⁵ Senator Tower's former campaign manager, as his campaign manager, and Californian Tom Reed as his policy and strategy man. As their first order of business, the Clements team implemented a program called Project 230 designed to increase the rural vote. For several decades, the major urban areas had supported the GOP candidates, so Clements decided to boost support in the rural regions. In Project 230, the Republicans organized in 230 non-urban counties, and Clements did what his GOP predecessors had failed to do – he personally visited the rural counties in an effort to muster support. Throughout the summer, while Hill neglected to campaign, Bill and Rita Clements traveled the backroads of Texas in two separate motor home caravans. They visited every town in Texas with a population of 5,000 or more, and Bill Clements effectively converted many conservative Democrats and "ticket-splitters" in the rural areas. His

⁵⁴Calvert and De Leon, History of Texas, 435-6; Barta, Bill Clements, 199.

⁵⁵Formerly, Nola Smith.

country-boy appearance and rough and gruff attitude appealed to the “good ol’ boy” network. Determined to capture the rural vote, Bill and Rita Clements, along with their Project 230 organizer, Omar Harvey, managed to visit more than 200 counties, and by the end of the summer, they had successfully placed a county campaign chair in 244 out of 254 counties.⁵⁶

After Labor Day, Clements shifted his focus to the urban areas. Rita became even more crucial to his campaign at this time because her husband disliked large Republican functions and believed that his wife “worked” the gatherings much better than he did. From this point forward, a campaign manager traveled with him at all times, because, as Haerle put it, “Bill shot from the hip, and sometimes the gun wasn’t loaded.” The Clements team also realized that the candidate had little name recognition in the state, so they decided to dedicate much of their \$4.3 million budget on television spots and a massive telephone bank.⁵⁷

Rita Clements pushed for the implementation of the Phone Bank Operation, the main program used during the last two months of the campaign. The telephone campaign surpassed any other phone operation in the history of Texas. Nancy Brataas, whom Clements had hired to organize Nixon’s 1972 telephone campaign, joined the team and set up a massive operation to contact 1.2 million households and 2.2 million voters. In the more populated areas, thirty-five volunteer telephone banks called 17,000 homes each

⁵⁶“TFRW Board of Directors Meeting,” Partyline 16 (January/February 1979), 11; Barta, Bill Clements, 199, 201-3, 206.

⁵⁷Barta, Bill Clements, 208-9.

day, while in the rural areas 25,000 home volunteers called voters daily. On election day, women volunteers in the phone banks contacted more than 500,000 voters, encouraging them to go out and vote for the Republican ticket.⁵⁸

In late October, even with this effort coming forth from the Clements camp, Hill still asserted that the Democrats would not lose. Overconfident, he avowed that “beyond any doubt” he would win the election over the Republican. Hill had taken the race for granted, and by the time he realized that the GOP had a chance of capturing the governor’s office for the first time in one hundred years, time had run out. In November, Clements proved him wrong and eked out a victory, winning by only eight-tenths of 1 percent. In a race that brought out a high number of voters, Clements secured the support of 48 percent of the conservative Democrats and independents. Between Project 230, the massive telephone operation, constant evaluations of polling data, and television advertisements that depicted a “softer” Bill Clements, the Republicans found the key to victory. Clements’s victory finally broke the stranglehold the Democratic party had held on the state for more than a century; the battle to create a two-party system had been won.⁵⁹

The Republican victory in 1978 culminated decades of struggle for the GOP in Texas. The state Republican party had continually worked to persuade conservative Democrats and independents to switch from the Democratic party to the GOP. While the

⁵⁸Ibid., 209-11; Rita Clements, “From Your First Lady,” Partyline 16 (January/February 1979), 9.

⁵⁹Olien, Token to Triumph, 258-9; Barta, Bill Clements, 216-7.

Democratic-dominated Sharpstown Scandal gave ambivalent voters an excuse to support the GOP, the Republican equivalent, Watergate, once again pushed them away.

Following the national crisis, many voters demonstrated an apathetic attitude toward politics. The Texas Republican women refused to admit defeat, however, and the GOP fared well in the 1974 elections, thus offering the party hope. After 1974, the Republican women, who had struggled with their own political philosophy during the women's liberation movement, started a rebuilding process in the grassroots support system. With the subsequent rise of several prominent GOP women and the explosive growth of the membership roles of the TFRW, the women began to receive recognition for their contributions to the growth of the party and their assistance in creating a two-party state. Finally, the Republicans had arrived. No longer would they be seen as challengers; rather, they were recognized as contenders. Winning the Democratic primary was no longer tantamount to winning a political office. Although they still had ample room for growth, the Republicans had successfully delivered the two-party system to Texas. Little did Republicans know, but within two decades, the GOP would transform from the minority party to the majority party in the state, and women would become serious candidates for office. Finally, two-party competitive politics had arrived in Texas.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS OF A CENTURY-LONG STRUGGLE

1978-1996

With the election of Republican Bill Clements to the governor's seat in 1978, it appeared that two-party competitive politics had arrived in Texas. Critics, however, questioned the significance of the election. Even Rita Clements, wife of the newly elected governor and long-time GOP activist, conceded that although the election of a Republican governor strongly indicated the end of one-party politics, real success would not be achieved until significant numbers of political offices on the state and local levels were filled by Republicans.¹ Within two years, however, Rita Clements and the critics received the proof they needed when Ronald Reagan brought forth a conservative program that swept a majority of Texas voters into alignment with the GOP camp. The Republican party demonstrated that after a century-long struggle it possessed sufficient strength to claim not only two-party status for the state, but also rise from minority party to majority party by the close of the twentieth century.

Issues aside, the transformation of Texas into a two-party state developed slowly and could not have occurred without strong grassroots organization. For more than fifty years, the members of the Texas Federation of Republican Women (TFRW) had built a

¹John R. Knaggs, Two-Party Texas: The John Tower Era, 1961-1984 (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1986), 233.

solid foundation for a successful state GOP. Beginning with small clubs during the 1920s and 1930s, the women diligently toiled behind the scenes as volunteer foot soldiers for the few GOP candidates audacious enough to run for office. At this time, the state party leadership seemed satisfied with an inert party on the state and local levels. Because of that attitude, the membership rolls of Republican women's clubs expanded primarily during presidential election years when interest ran higher. Not content with the lack of activity of the party at the top, the women began to build energetically from the bottom. After joining the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW) in 1938, the small coalition of Texas clubs began learning about the political system and studied strategies for running successful campaigns.

Between the 1930s and 1970s, as the national Democratic party became more liberal, the GOP women welcomed Texas conservatives to their ranks. With every election, the members of the TFRW became increasingly experienced in campaign organization, and without a doubt they became invaluable to GOP candidates who wanted to win. By the time of Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential bid, the Republican women in Texas had proven their worth to the state leadership and had significantly and positively affected the growth of the Republican party in Texas. Over the next fourteen years, the women expanded their roles within the party structure and became not only a prized voter group to candidates of both parties, but also prized candidates. As one journalist reported, "the clout of RWC's can't be denied."² Without the women and their

²Tom Kennedy, "Clout of RWC's Can't Be Denied," The Houston Post, March 1, 1999.

grassroots support, the Texas GOP could not have established the two-party system as quickly as it did. Conversely, without the strong surge of Reagan Republicanism, Texas women would not have been given the opportunity to prove that they were no longer just a cadre of volunteers.

Although Texas Republicans had embraced Senator Barry Goldwater as their choice for president in 1964, Lyndon Johnson won the general election in a landslide. Immediately following the race, the Republican national party chair chastised the Republican national convention delegates who had “foisted” Goldwater “on the backs of voters.” Obviously, the political climate in the nation had not warmed to a conservative movement in 1964. While Texas Republicans concentrated their energies on building the state party, Reagan, who had assumed unofficial command of Republican conservative forces following Goldwater’s defeat, began to amass a conservative coalition as governor of California. In 1976, Reagan decided to “test the waters” and cast a bid for the presidency. Texas GOP voters supported him in the primary race, selecting Reagan as their presidential pick two-to-one over the incumbent president, Gerald Ford.³

As the GOP worked to infiltrate the Texas political scene throughout the 1970s, a major demographic change occurred that helped swing votes to the Republican ticket. Between 1970 and 1980 the population of the state rose by 27.1 percent, an increase that

³Walter S. Mack, National Chair to Delegates of the 1964 Republican Convention, n.d., Box 637-12, John G. Tower Papers, Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas (hereafter cited as Tower Papers); Bob Schieffer and Gary Paul Gates, The Acting President (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989), 4; F. Clifton White and William J. Gill, Why Reagan Won: A Narrative History of the Conservative Movement, 1964-1981 (Chicago, IL: Regnery Gateway, 1981), 8-9, 176, 208, 220.

represented an almost equal rise in urban and rural areas. Many of the new state inhabitants migrated to Texas from northern cities plagued by steadily increasing unemployment figures. They sought and found jobs in the petroleum, agribusiness, aerospace, and computer industries. Traditionally, the Republican vote held strongest in the metropolitan areas in Harris and Dallas Counties where the populations of the major cities of Houston and Dallas saw surges of 43.3 and 25.1 percent, respectively. Additionally, the 1980 census reflected an increase of 64.5 percent in the urban fringe, an area where the GOP historically found support.⁴

The growth of an affluent population based on a more secure socioeconomic foundation added leverage to the state GOP. These middle- to upper-middle class white voters adhered to a conservative philosophy that stood against the empowerment of labor unions, heavy government regulation on business, the alleged over-burgeoning welfare system, and perceived special concessions for minorities. Pro-business advocates, the urban and suburban dwellers favored lower taxes and a “hands-off” approach regarding the relationships between the government and industry and between the government and its citizens. In foreign affairs they believed in maintaining a strong defense and stood adamantly against communism. As the population of urban counties and surrounding suburbs exploded, so did membership in the Republican ranks.⁵

⁴U.S. Bureau of Census, Census of Population, 1980: Characteristics of the Population, Part 45, Texas (Washington, DC: GPO, 1982), 7.

⁵Kenneth J. Heineman, God is a Conservative: Religion, Politics, and Morality in Contemporary America (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 97.

Reagan's program in the 1980 presidential election appealed to these voters and enticed the most conservative Texans. As his top priority, Reagan promised to continue to search for world peace, while simultaneously rebuilding America's allegedly weakened defenses. On the economic front, the presidential aspirant planned a gradual and methodical transfer of authority and resources from the national government to the states in order to reduce the outlay of federal expenditures by \$90 billion. He assured the American people that this would enable the government to balance the budget, cut personal income taxes, and begin to pay off the national debt. Also, he promised to address the troubled Social Security system. Reagan staunchly opposed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and abortion. On the rhetorical side, the Californian governor issued a challenge to all Americans for a spiritual revival, and he denounced any one who believed the "American spirit" no longer existed. Reagan promised supporters "the practical, down-to-earth things that will stimulate our economy, increase productivity, and put Americans back to work." With this plan, Reagan hoped to carry Texas in the 1980 primaries.⁶

Reagan's leading rival, Texan George Bush, however, expressed different plans for his home state in the primary election. He differed from the governor primarily on social issues. Bush, a candidate who had secured the loyalty and favor of the TFRW more than a decade earlier, continued to earn the endorsement of a large number of Texas women because of his support of legalized abortion and the ERA. When the two popular contenders faced off at the polls, however, Reagan edged the Texan capturing nearly 52

⁶White and Gill, Why Reagan Won, 8-9, 176, 208, 220

percent of the total in a record turnout of 526,769 primary voters. More importantly, the Texas victory also assured the party's nomination for Reagan.⁷

The Bush-Reagan contest, however, had presented some difficulties for the Republican women, many of whom became emotionally defensive over their choice of candidate, thereby disrupting club harmony. While the TFRW encouraged members to work for their candidate of choice during the primary season, the federation forbade clubs to endorse any one candidate. On several occasions, the federation leadership had to issue reminders that once the primary ended, all Republicans were to unite to elect the GOP nominee. While members remained split on the issues of the ERA and abortion, the state president urged them to lay differences aside, regroup, and support the majority's choice. On the other hand, bitter comments like "there's no way I can support that candidate" or "I can't work with those people" continued to be heard. Once Bush agreed to join Reagan as the vice-presidential nominee, however, the 9,300-member organization supported the GOP ticket as one.⁸

As Reagan gained momentum and built a strong coalition, his Democratic adversary, President James ("Jimmy") Carter appeared to be in trouble. Carter, a devout Southern Baptist, had previously claimed the support of Christian groups across the

⁷*Ibid.*, 2; "Republican Party Growth and Democrat Decline," from www.texasgop.org/library/growth.html, September 14, 1999.

⁸Cathy Smyth, "Get Ready, Get Set, Go!," 2, and "What One Woman Can Do- And Did!," 3, *Partyline* 17 (January/February 1980); Cathy Smyth, "Republican Unity Imperative," *Partyline* 17 (March/April 1980), 2; Michael R. Beschloss, "George Bush, 1989-1993," in *Character Above All: Ten Presidents from FDR to George Bush*, ed. by Robert A. Wilson (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 234-5.

South, but with the Democratic party firmly in favor of legalized abortion, that support base began to erode. To exacerbate the situation, the National Organization of Women (NOW) began to demand that the federal government fund abortions for women who could not afford the procedure on their own. In addition, conservatives throughout the South began to defect to the GOP when the Democrats showed support of the homosexual and lesbian cause during the 1970s. Gloria Steinem of NOW and Bella Abzug, former member of the House of Representatives, obtained a \$5 million grant from Congress to organize the National Women's Conference. Approximately 2,000 delegates met in Houston and officially denounced "white male racism" and passed a resolution in support of "lesbian liberation." Meanwhile, in San Francisco homosexuals led "gay marches" and "gay parades" in order to demonstrate in favor of gay rights. Their "chosen lifestyles," however, were anathema to many traditional, social conservatives, who increasingly shunned the liberal and moral permissiveness of the Democratic party, which condoned such behavior.⁹

Adding to the president's woes, economic indicators revealed dire financial problems during his tenure in office. After four years of the Carter presidency, the nation saw inflation reach 18 percent, which in turn drove up the price of real estate, which resulted in tax increases of 120 percent. Unemployment figures climbed, the prime interest rate rose to 21 percent, and gasoline prices at the pump jumped 52 percent. Americans grew increasingly discontented with the Democratic leadership.¹⁰

⁹Heinemen, God is a Conservative, 98-9.

¹⁰Ibid., 95-6.

Carter's foreign policy decisions seemed to be unraveling amidst great scrutiny. In a commencement speech at Notre Dame University in 1977, the president had declared that "anti-communism was a discredited policy of the past," and that Americans were "free of inordinate fear of communism." The president, unfortunately, appeared to be too optimistic. By 1979, the Soviet Union had greatly expanded its nuclear arsenal, had invaded Afghanistan, and had established military bases in Southeast Asia and Africa. In Cambodia, communist-supported forces committed genocide, murdering more than two million of their fellow citizens. Closer to American shores, the Soviets were supplying weapons and assistance to Marxist rebels in Nicaragua. More than 1,169 acts of terrorism occurred in 1980, many perpetrated by groups armed and trained by the Soviets. In Iran, Islamic rebels overthrew the Shah's pro-American regime and subsequently held fifty-two members of the American embassy staff hostage for 444 days. During the crisis, Carter's credibility as a world leader deteriorated, and, as rescue helicopters crashed in the desert on a failed rescue attempt, so did the president's hope for reelection.¹¹

The Republicans managed to capitalize on all of the negative situations hounding Carter's administration. In Texas, a united coalition of women once again went to work in order to secure the election of their candidates. As always, the women walked precincts, surveyed and identified potential voters, led registration drives, prepared mass mailings, arranged campaign rallies, and anything else a candidate needed to ensure a victory. Realizing the enormous impact of the telephone banks on Governor Bill

¹¹Ibid., 94.

Clements's win in 1978, the state Republican party created the Texas Victory Committee and appealed to the women for help. In this project, party leadership organized an elaborate telephone bank system to aid the national Reagan-Bush ticket, as well as state GOP hopefuls. Fifty telephone centers across the state and at-home volunteers attempted to contact 3.1 million voters before election day. In his gubernatorial race, Clements had used 25,000 volunteers to attain his goals. In the 1980 presidential campaign, the Texas Victory Committee summoned 30,000 volunteers to achieve its objectives. A coalition of Texas Republicans, Independents, and conservative Democrats rose to the occasion as more than 43,000 volunteers turned out to work in the project, resulting in the greatest numbers of volunteers ever to work for an election campaign. The TFRW also responded to the challenge. By November 7, members of the federation had worked approximately 650,000 volunteer hours for the GOP ticket. During the election year, TFRW President Cathy Smyth traveled 40,000 miles, including 30,000 miles in Texas, on behalf of the federation and candidates. As it had before, the grassroots support system of the state party responded to the needs and demands of Republican candidates.¹²

As the country prepared to go to the polls, Reagan implored citizens to ask themselves one question: "Am I better off than I was four years ago?" Many Americans must have answered, "no," because in the November election Reagan swept the vote and captured the executive office, receiving 489 of the 538 electoral college votes. The

¹²"GOP Grapevine," Partyline 17 (July/August 1980), 6; Cathy Smyth, "We've Only Just Begun," 2, Chet Upham, Jr., "Texas Milestones," 3, and "TFRW 1980 Campaign Contributions," 4-6, Partyline 18 (January/February 1981); Betty Ewing, "All Those Efforts Paying Off for Dallasite," Houston Chronicle, January 6, 1981.

popular vote gave Reagan 43,899,250 to Carter's 35,481,435. In Texas, the Republican garnered almost 700,000 more votes than the Democrat and gathered 55.3 percent of the total ballots cast. A record voter turnout helped Republican candidates in local races as well. At the conclusion of the contest, the state GOP boasted a Republican governor, a U. S. senator, five U. S. congressmen, seven members of the Texas Senate, thirty-five representatives in the Texas House, and 166 office holders at the county level. Observers no longer questioned the existence of the two-party system in Texas. It had arrived indeed, and the chances for further success appeared promising for the GOP.¹³

Despite the fact that party members banded together for a Republican victory in the 1980 election, a large number of women throughout the nation did not fully embrace all of Reagan's ideas. Specifically, some disagreed with the president's position on abortion and the ERA. On election day, only 46 percent of all women supported Reagan, while 54 percent of the men supported him. According to a Gallup poll, this spread showed the largest difference between the sexes since the organization began collecting data in 1952. Although Reagan worried about the "gender gap," he remained unwilling to compromise on the issues. His vice-president and eventual successor, George Bush, also supported the anti-abortion and anti-ERA planks of the Republican platform.¹⁴

¹³Richard M. Scammon and Alice V. McGillivray, eds., America Votes 14: A Handbook of Contemporary American Elections Statistics (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1981), 369, 374-6; "Growth of the Republican Officeholders" from www.texasgop.org/library/growth.html, September 14, 1999; White and Gill, Why Reagan Won, 237.

¹⁴George Thomas Kurian, ed., The Encyclopedia of the Republican Party, Vol. I (Armonk, NY: Sharpe Reference, 1997), 58.

The NFRW leadership realized that the federation membership remained split fifty-fifty regarding the legalized abortion issue. Initially, some members of the TFRW appeared uncompromising on the issues, in spite of the pleas from their state federation president, Lou Brown, who urged them to resist “drawing those battle lines” and close the gender gap. Eventually, the NFRW president’s office began to issue statements concerning the controversy. National leaders reportedly instructed all club presidents to direct members to respond “no comment” if asked about the federation’s opinion on abortion. The TFRW fully supported the direction handed down by the national presidents and proposed a resolution stating that approval would be denied to any club that used issue-related or religious connotations in its name. Regardless of various personal opinions regarding the issue, most women agreed that the issue did not belong in political debate and should not be emphasized if it risked splitting the party.¹⁵

TFRW members took a more open position regarding the ERA. In 1983, the state leadership prepared a controversial resolution that endorsed the president’s position to be presented before an upcoming convention. Speaking before the Fourteenth Biennial TFRW Convention in 1983, Judge Patricia Lykos of the 108th District Court in Houston,

¹⁵Lou Brown, “President’s Report,” in “Lou Brown’s President’s Report, 1983” folder; “Proposed Amendments to TFRW Bylaws, 15th Biennial Convention, October 26-27, 1985,” in “TFRW Nominating Committee-1985” folder, NFRW President Judy Hughes to NFRW Board, August 2, 1989, and Ruth Fox, “Fox Notes #20, September 1989” in “Fox Notes 20, September 1989” folder, NFRW President Huda Jones to NFRW Board of Directors, July 15, 1991, and “TFRW Resolution – Abortion” in “Patterson’s Priorities, August 1991” folder, Texas Federation of Republican Women Historian’s Collection, in home of Annette Hopkins, San Angelo, Texas (hereafter cited as TFRW Historian’s Collection, Hopkins).

received the largest applause of the meeting when she proclaimed that she did not want to hear the words abortion or ERA uttered during the session. She further declared that there were many programs and topics on which the Republicans agreed, and she encouraged members to focus on those issues and get back to the business of electing Republicans to office. The membership responded to the judge's exhortations, and the next day they voted to postpone indefinitely the proposed ERA resolution. Regarding both of these inflammatory issues, the TFRW membership agreed that the position of "no position" would better serve the party. Putting personal opinions aside, the women of the TFRW decided to remain committed to the advancement of the GOP.¹⁶

Despite ideological differences between some female members of the GOP and the president, the conservative coalition in Texas continued to gain strength throughout the 1980s and well into the 1990s. A poll conducted in June 1984 indicated that the political parties were moving closer to parity. Of the respondents surveyed, 26 percent labeled themselves as Republicans, 32 percent claimed to be an Independent, and 37 percent identified with the Democratic party. More significantly, the poll showed that the Republicans had gained 18 percentage points since 1964, while the Democrats had declined by 28 percentage points over the same period. As a reflection of this change, Reagan once again swept the state in the 1984 presidential election, claiming almost 64 percent of the popular vote. More importantly, the number of Republicans who rode into

¹⁶"Proposed Resolution #2 – ERA Resolution," loose paper, no folder, Minutes of 1883 Fourteenth Biennial TFRW Convention, Fort Worth, Texas, November 11-12, 1983, in "14th Biennial-1983" folder, in *Ibid.*; "Convention Highlights," Partyline 21 (October 1983-January 1984), 4.

office on Reagan's coattails expanded greatly. Phil Gramm, a recent defector from the Democratic party, won the Senate seat left vacant when John Tower retired. In the aftermath of the 1984 elections, the GOP touted ten representatives in the U.S. House, six state senators, fifty-two members of the Texas House, 287 county officeholders, and ninety officials at the district level.¹⁷

In 1988 George Bush followed in Reagan's footsteps and ran for the executive office, espousing a strict conservative agenda. A record 1,018,147 GOP voters turned out to cast ballots in the primary race between Bush, Senator Bob Dole, and Reverend Pat Robertson, where the Texan and former vice-president emerged as the victor. By the time of the Republican nominating convention, Bush's opponents had withdrawn from the race, and the only major issue at the convention involved the decision to place Indiana Senator Dan Quayle in the vice-president slot. Bush and Quayle faced a Democratic ticket led by Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, who had selected a popular Texan, Senator Lloyd Bentsen, as his running mate. Although unable to match Reagan's 1984 showing, Bush performed well in the general election, gaining 53.4 percent of the vote nationally and 56 percent of the total Texas vote. Bush opened the door for an even larger number of Republicans as the GOP infiltrated every level of state and local government in unprecedented numbers. Bill Clements had recaptured the governor's seat

¹⁷"Texas Political Parties Move Toward Parity," The Texas Poll Report 1 (June 1984), 2; Dennis S. Ippolito, "Texas," in The 1984 Presidential Election in the South: Patterns of Southern Party Politics, ed. by Robert P. Steed, et. al. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986), 159, 164-5; Richard M. Scammon and Alice V. McGillivray, eds., America Votes 16: A Handbook for Contemporary American Election Statistics (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1985), 396-7, 402, 407, 410.

in 1986, and in 1988 voters elected several other statewide officials. The Republican party also claimed eight U.S. House seats, eight state senators, fifty-seven representatives in the Texas House, more than 100 district officials, and an astonishing 485 officeholders at the county level. Statewide, by 1988, the Texas GOP had 709 elected officials. With every election year, the state Republicans continued to amass significant gains.¹⁸

As the Republican party grew, the ranks of the TFRW blossomed as well. Increasing in numbers and volunteer hours with every election, the TFRW averaged more than 10,000 members who donated more than 600,000 hours of their personal time each year to bolster the strength of the state GOP, even during off-election years. By the early 1990s, the Texas organization ranked as the second largest federation in the nation, eclipsed only by California. In 1991, however, the Texas membership surpassed the efforts of every other state group in the number of volunteer hours contributed. In 1994 Dallas County Judge Lee Jackson stated that in a network unmatched by the Democratic party, the female Republican workers constituted the single largest source of volunteers in all of Dallas county. This claim held up throughout most areas of the state. For this

¹⁸Ruth Fox, "President's Message," Partyline 26 (March 1989), 2; Richard M. Scammon and Alice V. McGillivray, ed., America Votes 18: A Handbook for Contemporary American Election Statistics (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1989), 423, 431, 436; "Growth of Republican Officeholders" and "Republican Party Primary Growth and Democrat Decline" from www.texasgop.org/library/growth.html, September 14, 1999; George Bush, All the Best, George Bush: My Life in Letters and Other Writings (New York: Scribner, 1999), 379, 381, 385-6, 391-2, 404; Beschloss, "George Bush," 236-7.

reason, the Republican leadership tapped into the pool of women and encouraged them to extend their volunteerism into other areas of community service.¹⁹

Since 1983 the Republican National Committee and the Republican Party of Texas had made a concerted effort to improve the image of the GOP so that the public would perceive Republicans to be more “people-oriented” and less “country-clubber.” In executing this nationwide goal, Republican leadership appealed to the Republican women’s clubs for help. Members of the Texas clubs welcomed the challenge, and as a result, non-Republican related community service projects became a permanent function of each and every club in the state. U.S. Senator John Tower and TFRW President Lou Brown spearheaded the first community service activity, and they directed women to take a leading role in a community food bank program. Brown stated, “this is an absolutely perfect vehicle for not only helping our neighbor, but also exemplifying the Republican philosophy of people helping people (not big government).” In their efforts to improve the image of the GOP and garner as much media attention as possible, the Republican women responded overwhelmingly. Over several years they broadened their scope and worked in projects ranging from highway clean-up to helping build houses for “Habitat

¹⁹Barbara Campbell, “President’s Message,” Partyline 22 (April 1985), 2; “10,000 Strong and Growing,” Partyline 23 (November 1986), 5; “Welcome to New Clubs,” 20, and “TFRW State Board Meets,” 19, Partyline 26 (August 1989); Jan Patterson, “President’s Message,” Partyline 27 (December 1991), 2; Lori Stahl, “Joining the Club,” Dallas Morning News, December 16, 1994; “1993 Membership,” The Republican Woman (July-August-September 1993), 24; Barbara Campbell, “Barb’s Wire #11-12, n.d., in “Barb’s Wire” folder, “Texas Federation of Republican Women, Campaign Activities Report, April 28-29, 1989,” in “Notes-Materials from July 28-29 Board Meeting, Presiding Minutes” folder, TFRW Historian’s Collection, Hopkins.

for Humanity.” Pet projects for most clubs centered on helping abused women and children and contributing significantly to cancer awareness crusades. Although initially begun as an “image enhancer,” community service projects became a vital function in all Republican women’s clubs throughout the state.²⁰

Even as they extended their efforts into the community, the women continued to increase their responsibilities within the party structure as well. For decades, the volunteers had walked precincts and worked telephones canvassing voters. Candidates used that information to gauge public opinion and to supplement professional polling results as they decided upon the direction of their campaigns. As the number of GOP officeholders increased in the state, however, so did the cost of professional polling. Recognizing the professional quality of the polls conducted by TFRW volunteers, the Executive Campaign Committee of the Republican Party of Texas offered to pay the TFRW to conduct polls as a part of their official party function. The TFRW quickly proved that their volunteers could complete a poll for half of the cost of a professional. Because candidates relied heavily on survey research as they planned their strategies and tactics in a contest, accurate polls were of the utmost importance. The TFRW took the responsibility of conducting polls seriously. In order for a federation member to participate in an official poll, she first had to attend a NFRW-sponsored polling school.

²⁰John Tower, “Senator Tower Encourages Food Bank Program,” 3, and Lou Brown, “Community Service Stressed,” 2, Partyline 20 (January/February 1983); “GOP Grapevine,” Partyline 25 (August 1988), 19-22; “Cancer Crusade a Big Success,” Partyline 22 (July 1985), 5; “GOP Grapevine – Community Service,” Partyline 26 (March 1989), 23-7.

Occasionally, the NFRW conducted a polling school in Texas, but initially members traveled out of state for training. The TFRW worked in conjunction with the Marketing Research Institute preparing survey forms, tabulating results, and analyzing data. The TFRW women performed so well, and so many candidates requested their assistance, that by the 1990s the demand exceeded the supply.²¹

In addition to polling schools, the TFRW also offered training in campaign management. In this highly successful program, the federation invited both women and men to attend intensive training seminars in all aspects of campaign management, including research, fundraising, image awareness, political action committees, campaign reporting, the media, communications, scheduling, targeting, voter identification, get-out-the-vote programs, headquarters management, and organizing a staff and volunteers. As a result, TFRW women received exceptional schooling on the art of running a successful campaign. By the close of the 1980s, women finally used the training and experience they had gained through years of volunteering and attending workshops to infiltrate the government at all levels.²²

Although the majority of Republican women remained content to work in the volunteer ranks, by the 1990s a growing number of TFRW members chose to step out

²¹“Polling Pays Off,” Partyline 23 (November 1986), 8; “Polling School Coming to Dallas,” Partyline 24 (May 1987), 3; “Professional Political Polls by the Texas Federation of Republican Women,” Partyline 25 (August 1988), 11; “Honor the Past, Celebrate the Present, Challenge the Future,” Partyline 26 (March 1989), 19; Knaggs, Two-Party Texas, 210-11.

²²“TFRW Holds Campaign Schools,” Partyline 25 (August 1988), 15; “Forty-two More Campaign Managers Trained,” Partyline 26 (March 1989), 18.

and declare their own candidacy. For years the state federation leadership had encouraged women to seek careers in politics. Through candidate recruitment programs the TFRW challenged women to transfer the skills they had learned working on campaigns and to use them to run and win in their own races. Federation members eagerly campaigned for fellow clubmembers, and the state organization provided financial assistance to prospective candidates through the Cleo Bohls Fund, a fund established in memory of a popular past state federation president. The women took the challenge seriously. In 1984, forty-eight Republican women ran for office, and four years later 130 women declared their candidacies. By 1989, the numbers increased even more dramatically when 172 Texas Republican women actually held elected positions and another 114 served the state through various appointments. In 1991 editions of the Partyline, the official publication of the TFRW, the organization proudly listed the names of members who currently held elected office in the state. The slate included the state treasurer, two members of the Board of Education, one state senator, seven state representatives, two justices on the Court of Appeals, twenty-nine district and county judges, a county attorney, twenty-seven district and county clerks, a county sheriff, nine county tax assessor-collectors, thirteen county treasurers, five county commissioners, twelve justices of the peace, and two constables. Every one of these elected officials belonged to a Republican women's club, where many of them had previously held leadership positions. Like the Texas GOP, the TFRW had grown and evolved, also. No

longer did the organization exist simply as a grassroots support system; rather, the federation became a springboard for many aspiring politicians.²³

Of all of the federation members who became elected officials, Kay Bailey Hutchison stood out as the favorite daughter of the TFRW. Hutchison, a long-time member and past-president of Northwood Republican Women's Club of Dallas, made history and set the standard for her GOP cohorts numerous times. After receiving a degree from the University of Texas Law School, Hutchison accepted a job as Houston's first female television news reporter. In 1972, at the age of twenty-nine, she traded her broadcasting career for politics when she became the first Republican woman ever elected to the Texas House of Representatives, where she served two terms. Using the strategies she learned through the TFRW, Hutchison visited every house in her district while on the campaign trail. In 1976, President Gerald Ford named her as a member of the National Transportation Safety Board, where she served as acting chair for two years. In 1982, Hutchison made a run for the U.S. Congress, but lost. Following a stint in the corporate world, she returned to the political arena. Hutchison gained national attention in 1990 when Texas voters elected her State Treasurer. As the first Republican woman ever elected to a statewide office in Texas, Hutchison continuously applauded the

²³Barbara Campbell, "Barb's Wire #8, August 1986," in "Barb's Wire" folder, "TFRW is Looking for a Few Good Women," in "Lou Brown, Invocation-NFRW 1989" folder, Edith Schuler to club Presidents, n.d., in "Patterson's Priorities, 1991" folder, and, "Republican Women Holding Office in 1989 Breakdown," in "Fox Notes 12, January 1989" folder, TFRW Historian's Collection, Hopkins; "Republican Women Elected Officials," Partyline 26 (August 1989), 14-18; "TFRW Women in Texas are Winners!," Partyline 27 (December 1990), 7-10; "Still More TFRW Women are Winners in Texas," Partyline 27 (April 1991), 7.

volunteer efforts of the TFRW. When discussing her 1990 race, she averred, “Republican women were the backbone of my campaign. They comprised the majority of my campaign leadership and they contributed \$15,000 from their PACs across the state.” She concluded, “I could not have won without the support of Republican women.”²⁴

Hutchison served as the State Treasurer until 1993, when Lloyd Bentsen resigned his Senate seat to take a position as U.S. Treasury Secretary. Hutchison entered the race for the unfinished term and once again enjoyed the support of Republican women. Hutchison represented the views of a large number of Texas conservative voters. Fiscally conservative, she favored a balanced budget and the elimination of all ties between the government and special interest groups. On social issues, however, she took a more moderate position. Although a supporter of Roe vs. Wade, Hutchison favored some restrictions on abortion, and she opposed federally funding most abortions. In the 1993 special election, she overwhelmingly defeated her Democratic opponent, Robert Krueger,

²⁴“Kay Bailey Hutchison Scores Another First for Republicans Across Texas,” Partyline 27 (December 1990), 3; “The Year of the Woman, Texas Style,” The Republican Woman (September 24-26, 1992), 14; “Hutchison Wins Big for Texas-Big for the GOP,” The Republican Woman (July-August-September 1993), 7; Sam Howe Verhovek, “From Demure Survivor to G.O.P. Star: Kathryn Ann Bailey Hutchison,” The New York Times, June 7, 1993.

by a margin of more than 44 percent. In securing this victory, she became the first Texas woman to be elected to the U.S. Senate.²⁵

Within months, Hutchison faced reelection. With financial backing and campaign support from TFRW members throughout the state and NFRW members across the country, she captured 84.3 percent of the vote in the GOP primary. In the November general election, she easily outdistanced her Democratic opponent, Richard Fisher, 60.8 to 38.3 percent. Once again, Hutchison claimed that the support from the clubwomen proved crucial to her success. In 1995, the members of the NFRW voted Hutchison as “Republican Woman of the Year.”²⁶

During the 1990s, not only did Republican women demonstrate their strength as volunteers and candidates, but also as a voting bloc. The 1990 governor’s race between Republican Clayton Williams and Democrat Ann Richards proved their worth in all categories. Following the primary contests in the spring, Williams held a strong lead of twelve percentage points over his Democratic challenger. Richards had just emerged

²⁵“Hutchison Wins Big for Texas-Big for the GOP,” 7; Verhovek, “From Demure Survivor to G.O.P. Star”; Beverly Kaufman, President TFRW, “Local Support for Kay,” Houston Chronicle, May 10, 1993; Richard M. Scammon and Alice V. McGillivray, eds., America Votes 21: A Handbook of Contemporary American Election Statistics (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1995), 417; Karen Foerstal, Biographical Dictionary of Congressional Women (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1999), 130-1; “Republican Women of the Year,” The Republican Woman (Winter/Spring 1995), 5.

²⁶Ibid.

from an extremely bitter primary fight, and it appeared that the Democratic party would be unable to reunite its forces. Most Texans viewed Williams as a “shoo-in.”²⁷

A series of gaffes eventually cost Williams not only the governor’s seat, but the ever-loyal contingent of Republican women voters as well. Williams made several comments that the women simply could not overlook. For example, when talking to a group of reporters on an outdoor trip, he made an unfortunate “joke” likening rape to bad weather, saying, “If it’s inevitable, just relax and enjoy it.” Although he apologized for the verbal blunder and swore that he had only the utmost respect for women, the comment outraged many. Later, Williams admitted to the press that he had employed prostitutes in Mexico a number of times as a young man, claiming that his actions were typical for a boy from West Texas. His original comment did not seem to be too offensive to the women, not until he described his visits to Mexico as “getting serviced” and used the imagery of bulls and cows in his explanation. Williams’s mental and verbal lapses only continued. Eventually he began to insult Richards outright. He told reporters that he planned to “head and hoof” her and “drag her through the dirt,” making another

²⁷“As the Plum Ripens, The 1990 Governor’s Race,” The Texas Poll Report 7 (Spring 1990), 1; Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover, “Texas ‘Runaway’ Becomes a Horse Race,” National Journal: A Weekly on Politics and Government (October 27, 1990), 2618.

illusion to cattle. Williams also made derogatory comments related to her condition as a reformed alcoholic. At every turn, the Republican seemed to be alienating voters.²⁸

As the election drew closer, the gender gap widened. One Partyline article, obviously attempting to excuse Williams's behavior, stated, "Everybody knows **actions** speak louder than words," and went so far as to label him as "The Women's Candidate." Many Republican women did not accept the soft peddling. After Williams refused to shake hands with Richards in a public meeting, admitted he paid no income taxes in 1986, and could not remember how he absentee-voted on a proposed state constitutional amendment that directly affected the powers of the governor, a large number of Republican women considered crossing party lines and casting a vote for Ann Richards.²⁹

By election day, Richards had pulled nearly even with Williams after months of distantly following the Republican. No official figures exist tallying the exact number of GOP women who crossed party lines, but the results indicated that they obviously did. Richards beat Williams by only 3 percentage points, fewer than 100,000 votes, in a race

²⁸John Gravios, "Williams Paid Prostitutes as a Youth," The Houston Post, April 22, 1990; Laylan Copelin, "Williams Speaks and Jaws Drop," Austin American-Statesman, July 12, 1990; Wayne Slater and Joseph Garcia, "Williams Comment 'Despicable,' Says Richards Campaign," Dallas Morning News, September 22, 1990; Germond and Witcover, "Texas 'Runaway' Becomes a Horse Race," 2618; Laylan Copelin, "With Gaffe Williams Denies Cut in Poll Lead," Austin American-Statesman, September 29, 1990.

²⁹Dave McNeeley, "Richards Gets the Upper Hand in Handshake Skirmish," Austin American-Statesman, October 16, 1990; Sam Attlesey and Wayne Slater, "Williams Didn't Pay Income Tax in '86," and George Kuemple, "Williams Ad Designed to Offset Gaffes," Dallas Morning News, November 3, 1990; Todd J. Gilman, "Gender Gap Key in Governor's Race," Dallas Morning News, November 4, 1990; "Governor Clayton Williams-The Women's Candidate?," Partyline 27 (August 1990), 4.

that never showed her leading in the polls. Exit surveys revealed that nearly six out of every ten of Richards's votes came from women. Republican party officials acknowledged that many GOP women had grown weary of Williams, and as a result, they either supported Richards or just sat out of the race. Either way, their action proved to be a boon to Richards. Unquestionably, the Democrat would not have won the election without the support of Republican women.³⁰

The Texas GOP women had become a prized voter group in state elections. When Ann Richards faced Republican George W. Bush, son of the former president, in her 1994 reelection bid, both candidates immediately moved to secure the support of Republican women. Richards, however, could not withstand Bush's challenge. By design, state GOP leadership selected a "hipper, more palatable" candidate than in the last election. Bush, in turn, hired a political consultant who specialized in "gender vote" issues. The Republican avoided verbal miscues and generally ran a safe race. The loyal contingent of Republican women liked their candidate, campaigned heavily for him, and in the November general election helped him secure 53.5 percent of the vote. Bush, however, received approximately 250,000 fewer votes than his Republican colleague, Kay Bailey Hutchison. The difference in their totals probably reflected the Democratic and Independent women's "cross-over" vote. One of the most important aspects of the

³⁰Laylan Copelin, "Ann Wins It All: Losing Lead and Millions, Claytie Rides Into the Sunset," Austin American-Statesman, November 7, 1990; Sue Tolleson-Rinehart and Jeanie R. Stanley, Claytie and the Lady: Ann Richards, Gender, and Politics in Texas (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 103-5; Lori Stahl, "Candidates Turn Focus Toward GOP Women," Dallas Morning News, January 14, 1994.

governor's race lay in the intensity each candidate showed in courting the Republican women's clubs. The only reason a candidate would attempt to go after a specific voting group so avidly would be because the bloc had the potential to either positively or negatively affect the results of an election. In other words, the Republican women's clubs had grown so powerful, they could either help candidates to win or cause them to lose.³¹

After working for more than seven decades for the advancement of the Republican Party in Texas, GOP women finally reaped the rewards they so deserved. In the 1996 primary election, the GOP garnered 1,019,797 votes, enough to surpass the Democratic party for the first time in history. Anyone who had studied the history of the Republican Party in Texas could not dispute the fact that the party could not have achieved that level of victory if the women's clubs had not spent the past seventy years laying the groundwork and preparing for that day.³²

As early as 1920, GOP women in Texas had dreamed of the day when being a Republican would not be viewed as anathema. These women banded together during the years when party leadership seemed too pre-occupied with patronage appointments to worry about elections. They realized that true party strength came from the bottom up, not the White House down. Who could have dreamed that the handful of clubs that

³¹Stahl, "Candidates Turn Focus Toward GOP Women"; Jeanie Stanley, "Bush, Richards Both Gear Campaigns to Women's Vote," Dallas Morning News, November 6, 1994; Scammon and McGillivray, eds., America Votes 21, 46-7.

³²"Republican Party Primary Growth and Democrat Decline" from www.texasgop.org/library/growth.html, September 14, 1999.

joined the NFRW in 1938 would become a force of over 10,000 members in a state where their party had maintained minority status for so many years? Through the lean years of GOP victories, the women dedicated themselves to the TFRW and to learning every aspect of political campaigning. Tirelessly, they gave hundreds and thousands of hours to the advancement of the Republican party. Regardless of the controversial issues that periodically bombarded the American public, the federation members held fast, increased their numbers, and stayed focused on their primary goals, to elect Republicans and do everything in their power to help bring two-party politics to Texas.

At a TFRW Board meeting in 1986, federation president Barbara Campbell related one GOP official's observation that "Republican candidates did not get in on coat tail, but on skirt tails!" In the Dallas Morning News, Sam Attlesey reported that in any campaign the Texas Republican women's clubs always ranked high on the "must woo" list. In 1984, George Strake, Republican Party of Texas chair, declared that he would take one woman over three men volunteers any day. Furthermore, he proclaimed, "there would be no Republican party without the women who do the work." Accolades abound when speaking of the Republican women's efforts in Texas.³³

Their vision and commitment to the party gained the Republican women a position of distinction in the history of two-party competitive politics in Texas. Not only did they positively impact the rise of the Texas Republican party, they also significantly

³³Barbara Campbell, "President's Message," Partyline 21 (December 1984), 2; "GOP Tackles New Math," Partyline 23 (June 1986), 3; "Houston Hosts TFRW Board," Partyline 21 (January/February 1984), 3.

influenced the political processes in the state as a whole. By the close of the twentieth century, the Texas Republican women had created an enviable model for political success.

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